

VISIONS OF NORTH IN PREMODERN EUROPE

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VISIONS OF NORTH IN PREMODERN EUROPE

Edited by

Dolly Jørgensen and
Virginia Langum



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ENVISIONING NORTH FROM A PREMODERN PERSPECTIVE

Dolly Jørgensen and Virginia Långum

In *The Making of Europe*, the medieval historian Robert Bartlett argues that ‘Europe is both a region and an idea.’¹ The same can be said of the North. The North is both a geographical region and an imaginative concept that varies, transforms, and coheres diachronically and synchronically according to the perspective adopted. Thus, North is a cardinal direction, but more importantly it is ‘an overriding metaphor, a kind of culturally defined and maintained structuring principle that helps — literally like the compass itself — to orient ourselves in the world.’²

North appears as this type of orienting direction in some of the earliest European literature when it serves to mark the opposite of Mediterranean warmth and temperance.³ In this view, cold comes forth from the North where

¹ Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*, p. 1.

² Fjågesund, *The Dream of the North*, p. 16.

³ In the modern era, writers like Viljalmur Stefansson have constructed a vision of the Arctic as a ‘polar mediterranean’ that is a highly fertile and connected European space. Such constructions, while seemingly breaking down the otherness of the North, reify the implicit ancient Greek and Roman idea that Mediterranean civilizations are the one and only European cultural model. See Steinberg, ‘Europe’s “Others” in the Polar Mediterranean.’

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it is born. The North sends bitterly cold wind and hurricane-strength gales that Ulysses must face.⁴ Many ancient writers imagined this cold climate as a land of desolation. When Pliny the Elder divided the earth into five zones, the northern and southern polar zones with their 'severe cold and perpetual frost' are contrasted with the temperate zones fit for civilization.⁵ Herodotus believed that continuous snowfall in the north led it to be uninhabited.⁶

Yet North has never been a singular direction or conception. While the views of Pliny and Herodotus align with our contemporary mental images of North as the land of cold, snow, and polar bears starving because of climate change, other premodern writers and image-makers drew upon a variety of visions of the North — from the land of perpetual sunshine to the land of great darkness, from the birthplace of civilization to the abode of evil. Contradictory images appear in the earliest ancient descriptions of the northern lands of the Hyperboreans and Thule, which are places of both light and darkness. Narratives of North in late antique and medieval writing invoke it as both the birthplace of Europe and source of barbarian destruction. North is located at the intersection of the sensible and the symbolic. Images of North draw from the material experiences of the far northern hemisphere: in far northern Scandinavia, the sun does not set in the summer and does not peek above the horizon in the winter, reindeer wander the northern landscape, and whales breach in the cold waters. But how writers interpret these phenomena — with wonder or fear, admiration or hatred — depends upon particular cultural frames.

The map by Olaus Rudbeck showing the Baltic Sea as the allegorical figure Charon on this book's cover is an example of a multi-layered North. In Greek myth, the ferryman Charon carries souls across the river Styx from the world of the living to the world of the dead. Rudbeck transported and reinterpreted this ancient Greek persona as North; the water becomes the body of Charon rather than a thing he crosses over. As discussed in the last chapter in this collection, Rudbeck was well known for this kind of juxtaposition of ancient myth onto northern geography: he re-envisioned the North through ancient Greek myths, arguing that astronomy had been invented by a Swedish king Atle who become known as Atlas, and that Sweden was the lost Atlantis. Rudbeck's image of Baltic Sea as Charon embodies conglomerate and contrasting visions of North.

⁴ Homer, *Odyssey*, bks IX, XIV, XIX.

⁵ Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, 11.68.

⁶ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 4.31.

The North as a circumpolar geographical and ideological space has received growing attention from humanities scholars interested in colonialism, imperialism, and environmental change. Yet curiously given these interests and their suggestive analogues in earlier cultures, modern scholarship and popular history have left the premodern North largely uncharted, instead almost exclusively mapping out the modern era.⁷ The premodern era has typically been incorporated into longer time period studies as the precursor of later ideas of North, such as in Peter Fjågesund's *Dream of the North: A Cultural History to 1920* and Peter Davidson's *The Idea of North*.⁸ While these works partly redress the lack of reflection upon earlier cultural images and formations of the North as a concept, they focus on the period after 1700.

The premodern North is, however, gaining traction as a space worth considering in its own right. Michael Pye's *The Edge of the World*, for example, focuses on the North Sea as culturally, economically, and politically formative in the history of medieval and early modern Europe.⁹ The recent edited volumes *Imagining the Supernatural North* and *Travel in the North* examine thematic practices of the premodern North, and additional studies investigate the geographical and cultural identity of particular northern regions in premodernity.¹⁰ Robert Rix's study *The Barbarian North in Medieval Imagination* probably comes closest to our intent of exploring the North as an envisioned, rather than physical, space with his analysis of 'out-of-Scandinavia' legends and their use in Anglo-Saxon texts.¹¹

This collection contributes and expands the reach and understanding of premodern North by examining how North was envisioned by those living both inside and outside of northern spaces. For our purposes, North is more than arctic, but it is difficult to say where North begins on a map. Research shows that while North is related to geographical longitude, it is also a place that is

⁷ See, for example, Launius and others, *Globalizing Polar Science*; Jørgensen and Sörlin, *Northscapes*. The idea of Canada as a northern space has attracted the attention of many scholars, including Wynn, *Canada and Arctic North America* and Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*.

⁸ Fjågesund, *The Dream of the North*; Davidson, *The Idea of North*.

⁹ Pye, *The Edge of the World*.

¹⁰ Barraclough and others, *Imagining the Supernatural North*; Gaupseth and others, *Travels in the North*. See, for example, Sobecki, *The Sea and Medieval English Literature*; Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World*.

¹¹ Rix, *The Barbarian North in Medieval Imagination*.

‘made’ through cultural work from both insiders and outsiders.¹² Rather than one thing, North is a space imagined by people, part of an identity, or state of mind, held not just by individuals but also by institutions, organizations, and societies.

This volume explores the idea of North from ancient times to the early modern period. As a collective, we are exploring where, who, and what was seen and defined as the European North over two millennia. The essays are all historically situated but approach their material from a variety of disciplines, including cultural history, literature studies, art history, environmental history, and history of science. Although the approaches are diverse, the primary sources used in the articles overlap significantly, including many that rely on the same histories, chronicles, travel writing, and maps, including the works of Pliny, Jordanes, Ranulph Higden, Olaus Magnus, and Jean Bodin.

The Northness of North

Although North is not one thing, recurring attributes bind together in order to give the North meaning. The North has been theorized as a ‘culture of opposition’, both from within and without.¹³ From within, residents of the North struggle against the climate and geography; they also wrestle with their own political identities. Outsiders exert influence in determining the relationship of North to the rest of Europe. Typically, such meaning-making often grounds itself in the Otherness of the North — it is defined in opposition to the South, specifically southern Europe, where ideas of civility became textually codified in the ancient period.¹⁴ Just as Edward Said stressed the role of defining East in opposition to West, North is established as distant and distinct from South.¹⁵ There is a tenacious grip of situated geographies on cultural conceptions and identities such as the West defined in opposition to the other. There is a relationship between the centre, taken to be the South in premodern Europe, and the periphery. Otherness can have both negative and positive attributes, leading to a complex meaning of the North as Other.

Not only do premodern authors ‘other’ the North in relation to the South, but they also tend to essentialize the North. As Edward Said notes, a geo-

¹² Jørgensen and Sörlin, ‘Making the Action Visible’.

¹³ Coates, ‘The Discovery of the North’.

¹⁴ Stadius, ‘Southern Perspectives on the North’.

¹⁵ Said, *Orientalism*.

graphical essentialism exists that assumes 'there are geographical spaces with indigenous, radically "different" inhabitants who can be defined on the basis of some religion, culture, or racial essence proper to that geographical space'.¹⁶ While literary and artistic sources use various meanings and interpretations of North,¹⁷ there are commonalities. Daniel Chartier identifies a 'grammar of the idea of North' in modern literature, a list of recurring attributes and characteristics equated with North. These include character types such as Vikings, Inuits, and explorers; natural elements such as icebergs, polar bear, Northern Lights, and snow; and narratives such as physical exploration.¹⁸ These characteristics lend themselves to a general conceptualization of North as a mythical as well as geographical frontier.¹⁹ Likewise, North also serves to delimit bodies, interactions, characters, and various other traits. These essential northerly traits both shape Western European premodern writing and inform contemporary scholarly work.

While the essays in this collection focus on Western European writing, Western thinkers are certainly not the only premodern writers to theorize the North and northness. Scholars in both Eastern Europe and the Islamic world wrote extensively about who and what was in the North. The sixth-century Alexandrian scholar Cosmas Indicopleustes, for example, constructed a model of the Earth in which the sun revolved around a huge conical mountain in the North, resulting in night when the sun was behind the mountain.²⁰ A newly edited collection of premodern Arabic travel writing demonstrates the intrigue and allure of the North.²¹ These early Arab writers offer early written accounts of settled Vikings in Russia, often using these barbarian people's cultural and religious practices as contrasts to the more 'civilized' practices of Islam. Similar to their Greek and Roman counterparts, Arabs envisioned the North as a land of eternal cold, snow, darkness, and desolation, yet experience told them that the land was also rich in culture, gold, and ingenuity. Throughout the essays in this volume, we encounter premodern texts that adopt and develop or contradict and question the concept of an othered or essentialized North.

¹⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 322.

¹⁷ See, for example, the essays in Jakobsson, *Images of the North*.

¹⁸ Chartier, 'Towards a Grammar of the Idea of North'.

¹⁹ Coates, 'The Discovery of the North', p. 23.

²⁰ Faller, 'The World According to Cosmas Indicopleustes', pp. 207–08.

²¹ Ibn Fadlān, *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness*, ed. by Lunde.

Land of Contradiction

The North, as an object of the southern gaze in premodern times, was a land of both known and unknown. Its epistemological status gave it great flexibility for interpretation and application. Indeed, we might say that the personality of the North was multiple and disordered, appearing as many different things to different groups over time, continuously interpreted and reinterpreted, confirmed and contradicted.

Early Greek literature invented the people who lived beyond (*hyper*) the North Wind (*Boreas*), literally the Hyperboreans. Pär Sandin's examination of the literary appearances of these people reveals two potentially conflicting views about them: as wild horsemen of the Eurasian steppe and as the supernatural chosen people of Apollo. The two different visions of the Hyperboreans as people of the North are constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed by each successive group of Greek writers to meet their own literary, political, or religious rationale.

In his chapter about the shifting classical definitions of the northern lands of Thule and Hyperborea, Lewis Webb shows how Northern otherness could serve as both positive and negative symbols of Roman aristocratic ambition. Thule was a mythical region or island north of Britain or Norway; Hyperborea was a land 'beyond the North Wind' where the sun shone twenty-four hours a day. Because Roman imperial ambition under Augustus appeared boundless, Virgil believed it would extend to the northern limits of Earth, to *ultima Thule*. But boundless desire was not always viewed in a positive light: Seneca criticized this trait as hubris and Lucan warned against being caught under the icy wagon of the Hyperborean Bear. The envisioned land of both ice and sun made an apt contradictory metaphor for Roman ambition.

The North, however, was more than metaphor in works of Roman geographers and historians. It was a place to be known and described, as shown in the chapter by Mirela Avdagic. Writers from the first century BCE to the sixth century CE knew that there was something in the North on the edge of civilization, whether that was called Thule, Hyperborea, or Scandza. They included these northern reaches in their geographical descriptions, creating layered meanings of contradictory elements such as islands and oceans, light and dark, uninhabited wastelands and organized tribes. The North was the beginning of classical civilization as the home of Apollo's mother and its end as the source of the barbarian invaders. For these geographers, North was a place construed by both map and myth.

Mythmaking features prominently in the history of the Northmen who settled in Normandy; the North was a foundational element of the identity politics

of the settlers. As Barbara Auger argues in Chapter 4, the telling and retelling of where the early settlers of Normandy had come from created a place for the North in the South. Normandy became the land of men named for the North Wind, who brought with them a maritime cultural perception of the world. This sea-based view of the world was dynamic, rather than the static view from the land. The northern character of the Normans was both nature (dependent on the conditions of the North where they physically came from) and nurture (based on their cultural practices and maritime outlook). Creating a place for the North in the stories of the South also figures prominently in the analysis of Latin history writing in twelfth-century Norway as discussed by Steffen Hope in Chapter 5. Local Northern ecclesiastical culture, particularly the importance it placed on the Norwegian saint Olaf Haraldsson, affected how the North was portrayed in Latin literature written by Norwegian authors. These histories of the world connected the North with the larger Christian narrative, fitting the region into the accepted story.

In medieval and early modern medical thought, controversies emerged on whether Northness was a matter of nature or nurture. Virginia Langum argues that although traditional climate theory described extreme climates (hot and cold) as leading to uncivilized dispositions, English writers attempted to reformulate the effect of northern climes on personalities. While stereotypes of hot and cold complexions appear in prodigiously copied medieval texts like the encyclopaedia *De proprietatibus rerum* (On the Properties of Things) by Bartholomaeus Anglicus, negative characteristics such as wildness or stupidity do not map neatly onto cold climates.

Complex understandings of northern traits extended also to animals. The simultaneous wildness and domestication of the North are apparent in premodern perceptions of animals in the sea and on the land. As Vicki Szabo recounts, marine mammals — the monsters of the sea — were depicted in medieval and early modern texts sometimes as hyperbolic spectres and other times as practical resources. Whales evoked terror at sea, but when washed up on the shore they were eagerly harvested; they were many things at the same time. Whales were only one of the animals that came to represent North, as detailed in the contribution by Dolly Jørgensen. Premodern mapmakers populated their maps with animal life, but more than being random images, the animals placed in the North took on symbolic meaning. They declared that the North was both a place of wildness with wolverines and polar bears but also a place of domestication with reindeer and otters.

Geographies of the North factored into these portrayals of beastly Northness, an association which extended to human populations as well. The moun-

tains of northern Britain and Scotland are not that far north on the map, but as Dawn Hollis reveals, they were symbolically another world for southern Englishmen. For Defoe, the north of Yorkshire was a wild but fruitful landscape; Scotland as north in contrast was a barren and sparse wilderness. Authors mapped these geographies onto people so that northern English were described as happy in spite of strange and quaint customs, whereas Scots were depicted as poor, lazy, and spiritually deficient. Giving people northern labels often had ideological consequences. As Jeremy DeAngelo explains in his contribution, English and Lowland Scots attempted to bolster their own 'southern' qualities by deliberately portraying the Highland Scots as northern heathens and sorcerers. In both word and image, the unruly populations of northern Scotland were envisioned as compatriots in arms and practice with the Sami of northern Scandinavia.

Drawing distinctions between peoples as northern or southern reified boundaries between the uncivilized and civilized. When writers in early modern Spain gazed to the North in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, they were looking through an opaque glass at a geographically and culturally remote region. Mateo Ballester Rodríguez argues that this created a vision of Scandinavia as a barbaric land full of fantastic phenomena, but direct contact in the later seventeenth century would change those portrayals. Italian views of North as the home of an evil wind stirring up the Reformation followed a similar trajectory. Helena Wangefelt Ström and Federico Barbierato argue that the North Wind, personified as Borea in the moral drama *L'Oritia*, was understood in Italy as both a physical and moral danger to civility. Just as Dante had envisioned the lowest circles of hell as icy cold rather than burning hot, the Northern cold had evil connotations.²²

Early modern writers from within the North, as Kim Simonsen discusses in the case of the Faroe Islands, combated the outsiders' mystical visions of the North by focusing on the real natural wonders and indigenous sagas of the region. Their North was an object of curiosity rather than fear. North could even be an object of admiration according to Stefan Donecker's contribution. In works based on Jordanes, Scandinavia was envisioned as the 'womb of nations' — the wellspring of European civilization through its emigrants. Northern empowerment derived from a vision of barbarity leading to civility.

The visions and myths of the North have had a long-lasting hold on the imagination. This volume, which begins with the Greek and Roman idea of

²² Davidson, *The Idea of North*, pp. 36–37.

Thule and Hyperborea, ends with Olaus Rudbeck's seventeenth century reinterpretation of those myths as real Scandinavian places, discussed in Päivi Maria Pihlaja's chapter. Astronomers, naturalists, and philosophers used their early modern 'objective' sciences to posit a dynamic and ancient north.

However, premodern notions of the North outlasted premodernity. The concept of Thule as the birthplace of the Aryan race gained currency in the German mystical Thule Society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²³ The appropriation of premodern myths formed a significant part of what has been called 'the Nazi supernatural imaginary'.²⁴ 'Thule' has been used to designate subsequent publications and musical groups aligned with Nazi political views. Many of these modern misappropriations build upon premodern notions of North.

The North as concept evokes both frisson and friction, particularly as deployed to draw borders around ideologies, traditions, and peoples, in some part due to its complex history. As this collection makes clear, the meaning of this demarcated North — whether positive or negative, shared or alien — and the grounds for making it — whether geographical, climatic, socio-cultural, ideological — is not monolithic but must be positioned in reference to particular texts and contexts. Nonetheless, the desire to locate, define, and describe the North and its contents appears as a consistent fascination for premodern storytellers, writers, and thinkers.

²³ McGhee, *The Last Imaginary Place*, p. 32.

²⁴ Kurlander, 'Hitler's Monsters'.

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SCYTHIA OR ELYSIUM? THE LAND OF THE HYPERBOREANS IN EARLY GREEK LITERATURE

Pär Sandin

Replacing the obscure Cimmerians, whose land is mentioned briefly in the *Odyssey* as a place of constant darkness,¹ the suggestively named Hyperboreans became the canonical representatives of the Far North in Greek literary tradition.² Greek poets and mythographers understood their name to mean the people ‘beyond (*hyper*) the North wind (*Boreas*)’. As such a vision suggests, their land, as depicted in the literature of the age before Alexander, is as complete a fantasy as the Cimmerian gate to the netherworld. Like the ‘Cimmerians’, though, the name of the Hyperboreans retains a nebulous connection to the real world of antiquity.³ Preserved inscriptions from the fourth century BCE record that the temple of Apollo on the island of Delos

¹ Homer, *Odyssey* XI.13–19. Ancient texts are cited from standard editions, usually those digitized in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* and *PHI Latin Texts* databases. Only fragment collections and cited translations are listed in the bibliography. If a translation is not explicitly cited, I am responsible for it.

² At least one author appears to have identified the two people, though: Hecataeus Abderita, *De hyperboreis*, frag. 8, ed. by Jacoby (*FGrHist* no. 264).

³ The Homeric Cimmerians have the same name as, but no relation to the historical people, mentioned by Herodotus and others (*Historiae* IV. 11, etc.), to which the Greeks may simply have applied the Homeric name as it sounded similar to what the people called themselves (Heubeck, ‘Book IX: Commentary’, pp. 77–79).

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received gifts, apparently symbolical sacrificial offerings, from somebody referred to as the Hyperboreans.⁴ One of the earliest extant literary accounts, that of Herodotus, also depicts individual Hyperboreans in ancient times bearing, and later sending by intermediaries, gifts to the temple of Apollo on Delos.⁵

In light of these sources, Franz Heinrich Ludolf Ahrens may have proposed the most plausible explanation of the origin of the name in myth. He suggests that it was a folk-etymological misunderstanding of a north Greek dialect word which literally meant ‘over-carrier’ and in the original, local context referred to people from the north of Hellas, Macedonia or Thrace trusted with the task of carrying offerings to Delos and possibly other prestigious temples in the south, a practice relating to the Greek traditional institution of *theoria*, ceremonial inter-state visits to religious feasts and sanctuaries.⁶ Other related explanations propose that the name refers to religious practices in the northern regions of Greece and the Balkans.⁷ The historical truth of the matter will not be a topic here, nor will be the learned, literary and political interactions with the myth of the Hyperboreans in later ages, for instance that of patriotically inclined Swedish men of letters from the seventeenth century onwards.⁸ Instead, we will revisit the oldest Greek sources and try to ascertain what they actually have to say about the way the ancient Greeks imagined and construed this northern country and its people.⁹ Apart from the Homeric Cimmerians, who vanished as soon as they appeared, the Hyperboreans constitute the first recorded example of Greeks, and consequently Europeans, concerning themselves with the Far North. Even if an almost entirely imaginary vision, the Hyperboreans remain the most productive and persistent Northern motif in ancient Greek literature, embodying as it were the canonical North of Greek myth.

⁴ *Inscriptiones deliae* 100.48–51, 104.3A.8–13, ed. by Couprie.

⁵ Herodotus, *Historiae* IV. 32–36.

⁶ Ahrens, ‘Zur griechischen Monatskunde’, pp. 340–42.

⁷ See, e.g., Van Windekens, ‘Les hyperboréens’, pp. 167–68.

⁸ See, e.g., Roling, ‘Akademischer Hyperboreer-Kult’, passim. See also the chapter by Pihlaja in this volume.

⁹ I have elsewhere catalogued and translated into Swedish all Greek and Latin sources mentioning the Hyperboreans until the start of the Common Era (Sandin, ‘Hyperboreerna I’, ‘Hyperboreerna II’) and also catalogued all instances featuring individuals of Hyperborean extraction in Greek and Roman literature until the seventh century CE (Sandin, ‘Famous Hyperboreans’), in the latter case treating scholarly aspects of some of the texts.

Eastern Realities

Which Hyperborean appearance is the oldest is impossible to ascertain, as most ancient Greek poetry cannot be dated with precision, and the literary history of the Greeks is fraught with pseudepigraphic invention; that is, forgery. For instance, did the poet Aristeas mentioned by Herodotus really compose the epic *Arimaspea* in which the Hyperboreans featured, or is it entirely a product of the imagination of the historian?¹⁰

Ἐφη δὲ Ἀριστέης ὁ Καῦστροβίου ἀνὴρ Προκοννήσιος, ποιέων ἔπεα, ἀπικέσθαι ἐς Ἴσσηδόνας φοιβόλαμπτος γενόμενος, Ἴσσηδόνων δὲ ὑπεροικέειν Ἀριμασποὺς ἄνδρας μουννοφθάλμους, ὑπὲρ δὲ τούτων τοὺς χρυσοφύλακας γρύπας, τούτων δὲ τοὺς Ὑπερβορέους κατήκοντας ἐπὶ θάλασσαν· τούτους ὦν πάντας πλὴν Ὑπερβορέων, ἀρξάντων Ἀριμασπῶν, αἰεὶ τοῖσι πλησιοχώροισι ἐπιτίθεσθαι, καὶ ὑπὸ μὲν Ἀριμασπῶν ἐξωθέεσθαι ἐκ τῆς χώρας Ἴσσηδόνας, ὑπὸ δὲ Ἴσσηδόνων Σκύθας, Κιμμερίους δὲ οἰκέοντας ἐπὶ τῇ νοτίῃ θαλάσῃ ὑπὸ Σκυθέων πιεζομένους ἐκλείπειν τὴν χώραν. Οὕτω οὐδὲ οὗτος συμφέρεται περὶ τῆς χώρας ταύτης Σκύθησι.

(There is also a story related in a poem by Aristeas son of Caüstrobius, a man of Proconnesus. This Aristeas, being then possessed by Phoebus, visited the Issedones; beyond these [he said] dwell the one-eyed Arimaspians, beyond whom are the griffins that guard gold, and beyond these again the Hyperboreans, whose territory reaches to the sea. Except the Hyperboreans, all these nations and first the Arimaspians ever make war upon their neighbours; the Issedones were pushed from their lands by the Arimaspians, and the Scythians by the Issedones, and the Cimmerians, dwelling by the southern sea, were hard pressed by the Scythians and left their country. Thus neither does Aristeas' story agree concerning this country with the Scythian account.)¹¹

Note that the Cimmerians encountered by Greeks of the age of Herodotus lived just north of the Black Sea, meaning that they could no longer serve as emblems of the Far North. Whether the *Arimaspea* is an invention of Herodotus or an actual ancient poem, the material is unrelated to the tale of the Hyperborean maidens bringing gifts to the temple of Apollo on Delos, told by Herodotus somewhat later. The latter will be treated only in passing here, as it does not pertain to the North or Hyperboreans as such.¹²

¹⁰ Herodotus, *Historiae* IV. 14–15.

¹¹ Aristeas, *Arimaspea* frag. 2, ed. by Bernabé = Herodotus, *Historiae* IV. 13, trans. by Godley. Herodotus's report of an epic *Arimaspea* gave rise to an obviously forged hexameter version, produced around the beginning of our age, presumably to be sold as a rarity on the book market (Aristeas, *Arimaspea* frags. 4–6, 11, ed. by Bernabé; cf. Dionysius Halicarnassensis, *Thucydides* 23).

¹² There are no peculiar markers of ethnicity or any information about the homeland of

The story of Arimaspians fighting griffins may be a fantastical folktale, to which Herodotus or his source has added the Hyperboreans, who are not involved in the dramatic action but seen as the proper inhabitants of the region treated. Later poets, including Antimachus of Colophon (fl. c. 400 BCE), appear to have conflated the Arimaspians and Hyperboreans.¹³

We do not learn anything about the Hyperboreans from Aristeas and Herodotus except that they are peaceful in comparison with their neighbours. However, the geographical and ethnographical context in which they appear is significant. The Hyperboreans are here geographically aligned with the people of East Europe and Central Asia, the most famous (or notorious) of which were the Scythians, according to the Greeks. The passages about the Hyperboreans are embedded in Herodotus's major treatment of the Scythians in the fourth book of the *Histories*. On Greek ceramic paintings portraying the gryphomachy (the motif of Arimaspians fighting griffins), the Arimaspians — the neighbours of the Hyperboreans who are taken by some authors to be the same people — are portrayed in full Scythian garb.¹⁴

This alignment contributes one of the main strands of the received Hyperborean literary tapestry: that they were a kind of Scythians. This notion is inherent in several of the earliest appearances of Hyperboreans in Greek literature, most of which are fragmentary or very brief. The Hyperboreans are mentioned in a papyrus fragment of the epic *Catalogue of Women* attributed to Hesiod, but of disputed authenticity, if usually accepted to be no later than the sixth century BCE.

]νεα μ[Υ]περβορέων εὐίππων
] φέρβουσα π[ολ]υπερέας πολύφορβος
Ἡριδανοῖ]ο βα[θυρ]ρ[ό]ου αἰτὰ ῥέεθρα,
]πρ. [] ἡλέκτροιο.¹⁵

the visitors in the tale about the Hyperboreans bringing and sending offerings to Delos. The young women and their accompanying male guardians might as well have been Greeks. On the tradition of the Hyperborean maidens in Greek and Latin literature, with a full review of the sources, see Sandin, 'Famous Hyperboreans', pp. 208–13.

¹³ Antimachus Colophonius frag. 141, ed. by Matthews (= frag. 103, ed. by Wyss), cit. Stephanus Byzantius, *Ethnica* s.v. Ὑπερβόρειοι; Pherecrates frag. 671, ed. by Lloyd-Jones & Parsons, cit. by scholium to Pindar, *Olympian ode* 3.28c; John Tzetzes, *Chiliades* VII. 144.673–74; Callimachus, *Hymn* 4.291, *Actia* frag. 186, ed. by Pfeiffer.

¹⁴ *BAPD* no. 136, etc. Hyperboreans proper are rarely if ever depicted in painting: see Zaphiropoulou, 'Hyperboreoi', pp. 642–43.

¹⁵ Hesiodus, *Gynaikōn Katalogos* frag. 63, ed. by Hirschberger (= frag. 98, ed. by Most, frag. 150, ed. by Merkelbach & West), ll. 21–24.

(Hy]perboreans with good horses:
] fertile [land] that feeds the numerous people
] deep-flowing [Eridanus']s steep currents
] amber.)

Here, too, the Hyperboreans are assimilated to the Scythian paradigm. One of the scraps of information we learn about them is that they are a people known for *good horses*. Without doubt, this places them in the great Eurasian steppe, close to the Scythians, with whom horses were intimately associated.¹⁶ The Scythians and Hyperboreans are probably not identical, though, as the 'Horse-milking Scythians' are mentioned in a catalogue section a little bit before (unfortunately with uncertain geographical relation to the latter due to the damage to the papyrus). The Scythians proper were only one of several tribes in East Europe and Central Asia with similar language, dress, and cultural practices, all of whom could and often were lumped together under the same name.¹⁷

Another case of culturally Scythian Hyperboreans is found in a fragment of the comedy *Delian Women* by the Athenian poet Cratinus, cited by Hesychius: Αἰθρία· Κρατίνος Δηλιάσιν. Ὑπερβορέους αἰθρία τιμῶντας στέφη· τὰ γὰρ Ὑπερβορέων ἱερὰ κατὰ τινὰ πάτριον ἀγιστεῖαν οὐχ ὑπὸ στέγην, ἀλλ' ὑπαίθρια διαφυλάττεται (*Aithria*: [The word is used by] Cratinus in the *Delian Women*: 'Hyperboreans revering *open-sky* wreaths'. According to hereditary ritual, the sacred places and offerings of the Hyperboreans are not kept under roof, but under the open sky).¹⁸ The sense of the adjective *aithria* describing the wreaths in the fragment is not undisputed. But if the interpretation of Hesychius is correct, which seems likely to me, this is an interpolation of an aspect of Scythian worship that was notorious to the Greeks: they did not build temples to the gods.¹⁹ The title of the comedy and the mention of the Hyperboreans could suggest that Cratinus included the tale of the Hyperborean maidens visiting Delos, but nothing in the preserved fragments gives any hints as to the general theme of the play.

¹⁶ Minns, *Scythians and Greeks*, pp. 48–49; Talbot Rice, *Scythians*, pp. 69–74; Rolle, *World of the Scythians*, pp. 101–10. See especially Hippocrates, *De aëre aquis et locis* 18, 20–22.

¹⁷ Minns, *Scythians and Greeks*, pp. 35–36; Talbot Rice, *Scythians*, p. 20; Rolle, *World of the Scythians*, p. 16; Finley, 'The Black Sea and Danubian Regions', p. 56.

¹⁸ Cratinus, *Deliae* frag. 24, ed. by Kassel & Austin, cit. by Hesychius, *Lexicon* α 1869.

¹⁹ Herodotus, *Historiae* iv. 59; Megasthenes frag. 12, ed. by Jacoby (*FGrHist* no. 715), cit. by Arrianus, *Indica* 7; cf. Pliny, *Naturalis Historiae* iv. 89.

A cultural and even ethno-stereotypical 'Scythian' reading is found also in Plato, who mentions 'Abaris the Hyperborean' (see below) together with the Thracian Zalmoxis as people that might know spells to cure a headache.²⁰ The Thracians, situated immediately to the north of Greece and Macedonia, were often conflated with the Scythians in the general sense of 'barbarians of the North East'.²¹ The Scythians themselves appear to have been notorious for their skill in, or foolish devotion to, pharmacology and witchcraft.²²

Perhaps significantly, the hitherto mentioned sources originate from Greeks belonging to the Ionic literary tradition, the cultural epicentre of which before the rise of Athens was the West coast of Asia Minor. As opposed to the Dorians, who colonized South Italy and Sicily, Ionic culture was mostly oriented eastwards. It is only natural that to the Ionians, the imaginary North should be assimilated to the most prominent ethnical and geographical features pertaining to the regions north of the Greek mainland and Anatolia; namely, the Scythians and the Eurasian plains. Accordingly, the notion that the Hyperboreans were ethnically Scythians or closely related appears as a main literary thread in their fragmentary saga. But another, potentially discordant thread appears as well; namely, that they were the chosen people of Apollo.

The earliest source for the Hyperboreans as Apollo's chosen ones is the poet Alcaeus of Lesbos. Although the text is lost, it is paraphrased in prose by the late antique rhetor Himerius.

ὅτε Ἀπόλλων ἐγένετο, κοσμήσας αὐτὸν ὁ Ζεὺς μίτρα τε χρυσοῦ καὶ λύρα, δούς τε ἐπὶ τούτοις ἄρμα ἐλαύνειν, κύκνοι δὲ ἤ<ρο>σαν τὸ ἄρμα, εἰς Δελφούς πέμπει <καὶ> Κασταλίας νάματα, ἐκείθεν προφητεύοντα δίκην καὶ θέμιν τοῖς Ἑλλήσιν. ὁ δὲ ἐπιβάς ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρμάτων ἐφῆκε τοὺς κύκνους ἐς Ὑπερβορέους πέτεσθαι. Δελφοὶ μὲν οὖν, ὡς ᾗσθοντο, παιᾶνα συνθέντες καὶ μέλος, καὶ χοροὺς ᾗθέων περὶ τὸν τρίποδα στήσαντες, ἐκάλουν τὸν θεὸν ἐξ Ὑπερβορέων ἐλθεῖν. ὁ δὲ ἔτος ὅλον παρὰ τοῖς ἐκεῖ θεμιστεύσας ἀνθρώποις, ἐπειδὴ καιρὸν ἐνομοθέτει καὶ τοὺς Δελφικοὺς ἡχῆσαι τρίποδας, αὐθις κελεύει τοῖς κύκνοις ἐξ Ὑπερβορέων ἀφίπτασθαι. ἦν μὲν οὖν θέρος καὶ τοῦ θέρους τὸ μέσον αὐτό, ὅτε ἐξ Ὑπερβορέων Ἀλκαῖος ἄγει τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα.²³

²⁰ Plato, *Charmides* 158b.

²¹ For example, Plato, *Res publica* 435e, *Leges* 637e. *Suda* records (s.v. Ἀβαρίς, α 18) that the name of the father of the Hyperborean Abaris is the same as that of several Thracian kings, and Virgil, *Aeneid* xi. 858 refers to one of the famous Hyperborean maidens as a Thracian.

²² Talbot Rice, *Scythians*, p. 85; Minns, *Scythians and Greeks*, pp. 86–87. Cf. Herodotus, *Historiae* iv. 67–69, 105; Theophrastus, *Historia plantarum* ix. 15.2.

²³ Alcaeus, frag. 307c, ed. by Voigt, cit. by Himerius, *Oratio* 48.

(When Apollo was born, Zeus adorned him with a golden crown and lyre, and on top of that having given him a chariot — and swans lifted up the chariot — he sent him to Delphi and to the streams of Castalia, therefrom to pronounce justice and law to the Greeks. But he entered the chariot and ordered the swans to fly to the Hyperboreans. The Delphians, as they became aware of this, composed a paean with melody, set up a chorus of youths by the tripod, and called on the god to come from the Hyperboreans. He, having pronounced law among the people there a whole year, as the time had arrived to let also the Delphian tripods sound, called again on his swans to fly from the Hyperboreans. It was summer, and the very midst of summer, when Alcaeus brought Apollo from the Hyperboreans.)

The sojourn of Apollo among the Hyperboreans may have been a canonical mythical motif in Greek and Roman literature, but no preserved source treats the matter comprehensively.²⁴ The religious sect of the Pythagoreans offered the theological doctrine that Pythagoras was identical with the ‘Hyperborean Apollo’, possibly a claim professed by Pythagoras himself.²⁵ Neo-Pythagorean authors fused this religious tenet with the tale of Abaris, a Hyperborean who was supposed to have visited Greece and, in the version of the Pythagoreans, become a disciple and friend of Pythagoras.²⁶ Like the tale of the Hyperborean maidens coming to Delos, these theological narratives will only be treated cursorily here, as they contain nothing that pertains to ethnical, geographical, or other characteristics of the Hyperboreans or their country (except that Abaris is supposed to have been a very righteous man).²⁷

Apart from Alcaeus, two other pre-Hellenistic sources seem to refer to the journey of Apollo to the Hyperboreans, both in an oblique manner and lesser stylistic register, and both proceeding from the Ionic literary tradition. The Hyperboreans are mentioned in passing in the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus*, perhaps of the sixth or even seventh century BCE. Pirates have captured the god

²⁴ Cf. Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* II. 674–76; Eratosthenes, *Catasterismoi* 29; Hecataeus Abderita, *De Hyperboreis* frag. 10, ed. by Jacoby (*FGrHist* no. 264), cit. scholium in Apollonii Rhodii *Argonautica* II. 675; Cicero, *De natura deorum* III. 57; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca* III. 59.6–7; Boeus and Simias ap. Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoses* 20; Callimachus *Aetia*, frags. 186.9–10, 492, ed. by Pfeiffer.

²⁵ Aristotle, frag. 173, ed. by Gigon, cit. by Aelianus, *Varia historia* 2.26; Porphyrius, *Vita Pythagorae* 28; Iamblichus, *Vita Pythagorae* 6.30, 19.91, 28.140; Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* VIII. 11.

²⁶ Porphyrius, *Vita Pythagorae* 28–29; Iamblichus, *Vita Pythagorae* 19.90–93, 28.135, 138, 140–41, 147, 32.215–17, 221, 36.267.

²⁷ For a complete review of the sources and a discussion, see Sandin, ‘Famous Hyperboreans’, pp. 205–08, 213.

Dionysus, but they do not recognize him for what he is, except for the observant helmsman:

Δαιμόνιοι τίνα τόνδε θεὸν δεσμεύεθ' ἐλόντες
καρτερόν; οὐδὲ φέρειν δύναται μιν νηὺς εὐεργής.
ἢ γὰρ Ζεὺς ὅδε γ' ἐστὶν ἢ ἀργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων
ἢ ἔ Ποσειδάων [...].
Ὡς φάτο: τὸν δ' ἀρχὸς στυγερῶ ἠνίπαπε μύθῳ:
δαιμόνι' οὖρον ὄρα, ἅμα δ' ἴστιον ἔλκεο νηὸς
σύμπανθ' ὀπλὰ λαβών. ὅδε δ' αὖτ' ἀνδρεσσι μελήσει.
ἔλπομαι ἢ Αἴγυπτον ἀφίξεται ἢ ὁ γε Κύπρον
ἢ ἔς Ὑπερβορέους ἢ ἑκαστέρῳ· ἐς δὲ τελευτήν
ἔκ ποτ' ἐρεῖ αὐτοῦ τε φίλους καὶ κτήματα πάντα.

(‘Madmen, which of the gods is this that you would bind prisoner? — a mighty one, our sturdy ship cannot support him. This is either Zeus, or silverbow Apollo, or Poseidon [...].’ So he spoke, but the captain rebuked him harshly: ‘Catch all the sheets together. Leave this fellow for men to worry about. I fancy he will get to Egypt, or Cyprus, or the Hyperboreans, or beyond, and in the end he’ll speak out and tell us his kinsmen and their possessions.’)²⁸

Here, the Hyperboreans primarily represent a place situated far away,²⁹ which pirates speculate could be the homeland of the captured man. But the helmsman has suggested that the man might be Apollo, which is probably what prompts the villainous captain to condescendingly refer to the Hyperboreans, Apollo’s mythical people.

The final pre-Hellenistic source which likely refers to the journey of Apollo to the Hyperboreans is the sixth-century iambic poet Ananius. Unfortunately, the fragment that remains of the text is corrupt at the crucial point:

Ἀπολλον, ὅς ποῦ Δῆλον ἢ Πυθῶν' ἔχεις
ἢ Νάξον ἢ Μίλητον ἢ θείην Κλάρων,
ἴκεο †καθ' ἰέρ' ἢ† Σκύθας ἀφίξεαι.³⁰

²⁸ *Hymnus Homericus in Bacchum* 17–21, 26–30, trans. by West.

²⁹ The Hyperboreans in the sense of ‘Timbuktu’, that is an unfeasibly distant place, is a literary figure that will become common, with added layers of meaning, in the Roman authors: see the subsequent article by Lewis Webb in this collection. It is less frequent in Greek, but cf. Pindar, *Isthmian ode* 6.23; Epicurus, *Epistulae frag.* 121, ed. by Arrighetti.

³⁰ Ananius, frag. 1, ed. by West, cit. by Aristophanes, *Ranae* 659, scholium in Aristophanis *Ranas* 659.

(Apollo, you who may hold Delos or the Pytho
or Naxos or Miletos or holy Klaros,
come †[...]† you go to the Scythians.)

Suggested emended readings translate into ‘come to your temples, before you go to the Scythians’, ‘[...] lest you will wind up among the Scythians’, ‘[...] why should you go to the Scythians?’. The iambic style is in the lower register, and the point may well be that Apollo should keep to his Greek domains rather than dally among Scythian barbarians. At any rate, it is clear that it is the Hyperboreans, the traditional destination of Apollo’s journey, who are here referred to as Scythians.

Western Ideals

The ethnical simplification and less than venerable attitude towards the Hyperboreans as Scythians presented in the lower style and, perhaps, Ionic culture, is in stark contrast to the preserved instances in Greek lyrical poetry, mostly belonging to the Doric cultural tradition. However, little or nothing that pertains to the Hyperboreans is left from the lyrical poetry of the sixth century or earlier. Apart from Himerius’s paraphrase of Alcaeus, where we saw nothing of actual descriptions of the people and their land, Simonides is said to have treated the theme, but nothing of the content of the poems in question is known, although he may possibly have referred to the Hyperboreans as *chili-eteis*, ‘thousand-year-old’.³¹ The outstanding representative of the high-register, lyrical view of the Hyperboreans is Pindar. If Herodotus’s or Aristaeas’s description of the land of the Hyperboreans as situated north of the Scythians and other ‘Asiatic’ peoples is the emblematic version of a realist or low-register view on the matter, Pindar’s depiction in the tenth *Pythian ode* is the fundamental and perhaps seminal text of an ‘idealist’, sacral, and religious approach.

³¹ Simonides, frag. 65, ed. by Page (*PMG* no. 570), cit. by Strabo, *Geographia* xv. 1.711. The word is not explicitly attributed to Simonides but used by Strabo, who states only: ‘he [Megasthenes, frag. 27b, ed. by Jacoby (*FGrHist* no. 715)] says the same things about the thousand-year-old Hyperboreans as Simonides, Pindar and the mythologists.’ ‘Thousand-year-old Hyperboreans’ looks like a learned citation, though, and the Greek style and metre of *chiliētōn Hyperborēōn* might well be choral lyric. Those who have understood the words as a quotation has attributed them to Pindar (frag. 53, ed. by Boeckh; frag. 257, ed. by Schroeder), but if so, this reference must come in addition to the tenth *Pythian ode*, to which Strabo most certainly refers here.

ὁ χάλκεος οὐρανὸς οὐ ποτ' ἀμβατὸς αὐτῷ·
 ὅσαις δὲ βροτὸν ἔθνος ἀγλαΐαις ἀ-
 πτόμεσθα, περαίνει πρὸς ἔσχατον
 πλόον· ναυσὶ δ' οὔτε πεζὸς ἰὼν <κεν> εὖροις
 ἐς Ὑπερβορέων ἀγῶνα θαυμαστὰν ὁδόν.

παρ' οἷς ποτε Περσεὺς ἐδαίσατο λαγέτας,
 δώματ' ἐσελθὼν,
 κλειτὰς ὄνων ἐκατόμβας ἐπιτόσσαις θεῷ
 ῥέζοντας· ὦν θαλίαις ἔμπεδον
 εὐφαιμίαις τε μάλιστ' Ἀπόλλων
 χαίρει, γελᾷ θ' ὁρῶν ὕβριν ὀρθίαν κνωδάλων.

Μοῖσα δ' οὐκ ἀποδαμεί
 τρόποις ἐπὶ σφετέροισι· παντᾶ δὲ χοροὶ παρθένων
 λυρᾶν τε βοαὶ καναχαὶ τ' αὐλῶν δονέονται·
 δάφναι τε χρυσῆα κόμας ἀναδήσαν-
 τες εἰλαπινάζουσιν εὐφρόνως.
 νόσοι δ' οὔτε γῆρας οὐλόμενον κέκραται
 ἱερᾶ γενεᾶ· πόνων δὲ καὶ μαχᾶν ἄτερ

οἰκέοισι φυγόντες
 ὑπέρδικον Νέμεσιν. θρασεία δὲ πνέων καρδίᾳ
 μόλεν Δανάας ποτὲ παῖς, ἀγείτο δ' Ἀθάναι,
 ἐς ἀνδρῶν μακάρων ὄμιλον.

(The bronze heaven is never his to scale,
 but as for the all the glories which our mortal race
 attains, he completes the furthest voyage.
 And traveling neither by ships nor on foot could you find
 the marvelous way to the assembly of the Hyperboreans.

With them Perseus, the leader of the people, once feasted,
 upon entering their halls,
 when he came upon them sacrificing glorious hecatombs
 of asses to the god. In their banquets
 and praises Apollo ever finds greatest delight
 and laughs to see the beasts' braying insolence.

And the Muse is no stranger
 to their ways, for everywhere choruses of maidens,
 sounds of lyres, and pipes' shrill notes are stirring.
 With golden laurel they crown their hair
 and feast joyfully.

Neither sickness nor accursed old age mingles
 with that holy race, but without toils or battles
 they dwell there, having escaped
 strictly judging Nemesis. Breathing courage in his heart,
 the son of Danaë once came — Athena led him —
 to that throng of blessed men.)³²

This is the first extant text that describes the Hyperboreans as a supernatural people, and possibly the seminal version of this variant of the myth, being dated to 498 BCE as the oldest preserved poem of Pindar (unless the supernatural aspect was found earlier in Simonides). The entire description expands on the theme of the ‘furthest voyage’ or ultimate reach (the *non plus ultra*). This refers to the ultimate conditions of superiority attainable by mortals, which are contrasted to the gods, represented by the unattainable brazen heavens. The Hyperboreans in Pindar are emblems of the perfect mortal condition, reached also by heroes such as Perseus during their lifetime of achievement. They are not supernatural in the sense of divine or even superhuman, but rather the best possible for human beings. What we know of Pindar, his poetical style, and thematic preferences may suggest that this existentialist approach is his innovation rather than a traditional description, even if it was a logical interpolation of traditional descriptions of the Hyperboreans and their relation to Apollo to mirror those of Homer on Poseidon and the Ethiopians.³³ Superiority may be potentially inherent in the notion of a people particularly favoured or visited by a god, but unless Simonides referred to the Hyperboreans as living a thousand years, there is nothing in the admittedly scant evidence before Pindar that explicitly suggests such a notion.³⁴

That Perseus visited the Hyperboreans may also be an innovation of Pindar, who hints that this took place during his quest for the head of the Gorgon Medusa.³⁵ Significantly, I will argue, there is nothing in Pindar that suggests a Hyperborean affinity with, or geographical locality close to, the Scythians. On the contrary, he seems deliberately to render his Hyperboreans as distinctly *non*-Scythian as possible. There are a number of details pertaining to their cus-

³² Pindar, *Pythian ode* 10.29–44, trans. by Race.

³³ Homer, *Iliad* I. 423–24, XXIII. 205–07, *Odyssey* I. 22–26, v. 282–87.

³⁴ Nor is there any hint in Homer about any supernatural characteristics of the land or people of the Ethiopians, visited by the gods, who are only said to be *amymones*, ‘blameless’ (Homer, *Iliad* I. 423), and affluent enough to offer meals to the gods.

³⁵ Pindar, *Pythian ode* 10.45–46.

toms and geographical region in two of his poems that suggest that the intention of Pindar may have been to turn them into veritable *anti-Scythians*.

In the poem cited above, the locality seems almost supernatural, being unreachable by foot or ship. It is implied that Perseus flew there.³⁶ As is evident from the third *Olympian ode*, cited below, the unreachable location should be understood as a mountainous rather than otherworldly region, the opposite of the Scythian horse-friendly plains. The Hyperboreans are portrayed as having customs similar to the Greeks, with choruses, laurels, and identical musical instruments. The only distinction is that they sacrifice asses, not cattle or sheep, to the god. This peculiar notion, retained in some Hellenistic poetical descriptions of the Hyperboreans,³⁷ may be the innovation of the poet, and a strategy to separate them from the Scythians, for Scythia was thought to have no asses or mules. According to an anecdote from the Persian invasion in 513 BCE, the formidable Scythian battle horses were frightened by the braying of Persian asses, leading to defeat in several battles. This event should have been known to Pindar, who came from Thebes, notorious for ‘Medizing’, that is, friendliness to Persians. It is now known from the version of Herodotus:

Τὸ δὲ τοῖσι Πέρσῃσι τε ἦν σύμμαχον καὶ τοῖσι Σκύθησι ἀντίζοον ἐπιτιθεμένοισι τῷ Δαρείου στρατοπέδῳ, θῶμα μέγιστον ἐρέω, τῶν τε ὄνων ἢ φωνὴ καὶ τῶν ἡμιόνων τὸ εἶδος. οὔτε γὰρ ὄνον οὔτε ἡμίονον γῇ ἢ Σκυθικῇ φέρει, ὥς καὶ πρότερόν μοι δεδήλωται· οὐδὲ ἔστι ἐν τῇ Σκυθικῇ πάσῃ χώρῃ τὸ παράπαν οὔτε ὄνος οὔτε ἡμιόνος διὰ τὰ ψύχρα. ὑβρίζοντες ὧν οἱ ὄνοι ἐτάρασσον τὴν ἵππον τῶν Σκυθέων· πολλάκις δὲ ἐπελαυνόντων ἐπὶ τοὺς Πέρσας μεταξὺ ὅπως ἀκούσειαν οἱ ἵπποι τῶν ὄνων τῆς φωνῆς, ἐταράσσοντό τε ὑποστρεφόμενοι καὶ ἐν θῶματι ἔσκον, ὀρθὰ ἰστάντες τὰ ὦτα, ἅτε οὔτε ἀκούσαντες πρότερον φωνῆς τοιαύτης οὔτε ἰδόντες τὸ εἶδος.

(Most strange it is to relate, but what aided the Persians and thwarted the Scythians in their attacks on Darius's army was the braying of the asses and the appearance of the mules. For, as I have before shown, Scythia bears no asses or mules; nor is there in the whole of Scythia any ass or a mule, by reason of the cold. Therefore the asses, when they brayed loudly, alarmed the Scythian horses; and often, when they were in the act of charging the Persians, if the horses heard the asses bray they would turn back in affright or stand astonished with ears erect, never having heard a like noise or seen a like creature.)³⁸

³⁶ With his winged sandals, often depicted on vases from the period, e.g., *BAPD* nos 201820, 206328.

³⁷ Callimachus, frags. 186.10, 492, ed. by Pfeiffer; Boeus and Simias ap. Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoses* 20.

³⁸ Herodotus, *Historiae* iv. 129, trans. by Godley, cf. iv. 28.

We should observe that Herodotus uses the word *hybrizantes*, here translated as ‘brayed loudly’, while Pindar says that Apollo takes delight in the *hybrin orthian* of the asses, the sense of which has been debated but which Race chooses to understand as ‘braying insolence’.³⁹ If Pindar and Herodotus accordingly both use the word *hybris*, properly an act of violence or outrage, to refer to the shrill braying of the asses, this could suggest that their depiction has a common source.⁴⁰ At any rate, Pindar chooses to associate the Hyperboreans with asses, which were not only thought to be unheard of in Scythia, but which were associated with defeats of the Scythians in battle by the Persians.

In two other lyrical examples, one of Pindar and one of Bacchylides, the Hyperboreans are mentioned briefly as inhabitants of a country far away, to which a magical temple and the Lydian king Croesus, respectively, are transferred through the intervention of Apollo.⁴¹ In the latter case, Bacchylides takes the sacral, Pindaric interpretation of the Hyperboreans as far as to understand their land as a sort of Elysium, a place for the blessed elect to inhabit as an alternative to death, but this is an eccentric approach.⁴² We learn nothing of the Hyperboreans or their land in these examples, but there is one more depiction in Pindar’s third *Olympian ode*, which, while shorter and more convoluted than the one in the tenth *Pythian*, gives more information about his view of its location and climate. Pindar here contradicts the notion that the Hyperboreans are unreachable on foot, yet the one who does reach them this way is Heracles, who can do anything. Heracles goes north in order to find the olive tree and introduce it to Hellas, not primarily for the purpose of agriculture and improved sustenance, but to use its leaves for crowning the victors in the Olympic contests:

γλαυκόχροα κόσμον ἐλαίας, τὰν ποτε
 Ἰστρου ἀπὸ σκιαρᾶν
 παγᾶν ἔνεικεν Ἀμφιτρυωνιάδας,
 τῶν Οὐλυμπία κάλλιστον ἀέθλων,
 δᾶμον Ὑπερβορέων πείσαις Ἀπόλ-
 λωνος θεράποντα λόγῳ.

³⁹ Accordingly understanding *orthian* to refer to the shrill note of the braying.

⁴⁰ It might also support this understanding of the passage of Pindar, which is that of the scholium *ad loc.*, in opposition to those modern scholars who take *hybrin orthian* to refer to the erect phalluses of the asses.

⁴¹ Pindar, *Paeon* B2 (VIII) 61–67, ed. by Rutherford = frag. 52i.61–67, ed. by Maehler; Bacchylides, *Epinikion* 3.57–62.

⁴² Cf. Jebb, *Bacchylides*, p. 261.

(The gray-colored adornment of olive, which once
Amphitryon's son brought
from the shady springs of Ister
to be the fairest memorial of the contests at Olympia,
after he persuaded the Hyperborean people,
Apollo's servants, with his speech.)⁴³

The precinct of Olympia seemed naked to Heracles, not yet adorned with trees.

δὴ τότ' ἐς γαῖαν πορεύεν θυμὸς ὥρμα
Ἰστρίαν νιν.

(Then it was that his heart urged him to go
to the Istrian land.)⁴⁴

For here he had once (before, presumably) arrived in search of the Golden-horned doe:

τὰν μεθέπων ἶδε καὶ κείναν χθόνα
πνοιαῖς ὀπιθεν Βορέα
ψυχροῦ· τόθι δένδρεα θάμβαινε σταθεῖς.

(In pursuit of her he saw, among other places, that land
beyond the blast of the cold
North Wind, where he stood and wondered at the trees.)⁴⁵

As we can see, Pindar in this poem states that the land of the Hyperboreans is situated near the *sources* of the Ister (Danube), which as far as the Greeks knew lay to the north-west, very far, indeed at the opposite end of Europe, from the Scythians: ῥέει γὰρ δὴ διὰ πάσης Εὐρώπης ὁ Ἴστρος, ἀρξάμενος ἐκ Κελτῶν, οἱ ἔσχατοι πρὸς ἡλίου δυσμέων μετὰ Κύνητας οἰκέουσι τῶν ἐν τῇ Εὐρώπῃ· ῥέων δὲ διὰ πάσης Εὐρώπης ἐς τὰ πλάγια τῆς Σκυθικῆς ἐσβάλλει (For the Ister traverses the whole of Europe, rising among the Celts who, save only the Cynetes, are the most westerly dwellers in Europe, and flowing thus clean across Europe it issues forth along the borders of Scythia).⁴⁶ Herodotus is not unlikely to follow Hecataeus here.⁴⁷ The location of the Hyperboreans close to the sources of the Danube also indirectly confirms the hints in the tenth *Pythian ode* that they

⁴³ Pindar, *Olympian ode* 3.13–16, trans. by Race.

⁴⁴ Pindar, *Olympian ode* 3.25–26, trans. by Race.

⁴⁵ Pindar, *Olympian ode* 3.30–32, trans. by Race.

⁴⁶ Herodotus, *Historiae* 49. Cf. Aristotle, *Meteorologica* 350a–b.

⁴⁷ Cf. Jacoby, 'Hekataios von Milet', pp. 349–50.

inhabit mountainous regions, the normal place for sources of rivers to appear. This geographical location may be an innovation of Pindar.⁴⁸

Living in the mountains, not the Scythian plains, in the far north-west at the opposite end of the great river Ister, and sacrificing asses, unheard of by Scythians and feared by their horses, the Hyperboreans are depicted by Pindar as a highly civilized people dedicated to music and a service of the god which is similar to that of the Greeks, with choruses and hecatombs. Perhaps unjustly, the Scythians in contrast were notorious among the Greeks for intolerably harsh customs, including excessive drinking and promiscuity, human sacrifice, taking body parts from slain enemies as trophies, and burning mages and their families alive in the case of mistaken prophecies.⁴⁹ The cultural and religious customs of the Scythians were thought to be the exact opposite of those of the Greeks and the Hyperboreans as described by Pindar: they did not have temples to the gods (see above), they did not employ music in their religious cult, and flutes (*auloi*), which Pindar says were heard 'everywhere' among the Hyperboreans, were entirely unheard of.⁵⁰ According to Herodotus, the Scythians were extremely hostile to foreign customs in general and Greek ones in particular, and killed kinsmen who adopted them.⁵¹ There is accordingly much to suggest that Pindar's Hyperboreans are intentionally portrayed as the exact opposites of the popular Scythian stereotype.

⁴⁸ It is also ascribed to Aeschylus in the lost drama *Prometheus solutus* (frag. 197, ed. by Radt, cit. by scholium in Apollonius Rhodius iv. 282–91b), but I subscribe to the view that this drama like the *Prometheus vinctus* is most likely spurious and at any rate later than 476/75 BCE, when the third *Olympian ode* was performed.

⁴⁹ See Rolle, *World of the Scythians*, pp. 7–10; Herodotus, *Historiae* iv. 59–81; Anacreon, frag. 11b, ed. by Page (PMG no. 356); Sophocles, frag. 473, ed. by Radt; Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazousae* 1001–25; Plato, *Leges* 637e.

⁵⁰ Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* i. 104; Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 78b; Plutarchus, *Septem sapientium convivium* 150d–e. This information is attributed to Anacharsis, a Scythian wise man who was said to have visited the Greeks in the early sixth century BCE (Herodotus, *Historiae* iv. 76–77). Anacharsis is said by some sources to have admitted to be un-Scythian, i.e., comparatively gentle and civilized, in his manners (Stobaeus, *Anthologium* iv. 29a.16; *Gnomologium Vaticanum* 22, ed. by Sternbach). There is evidence that not only the famous Anacharsis but the Scythians as such, and in particular the northernmost living Scythians, were sometimes later seen in a positive light, as 'unspoiled barbarians' (Romm, *Edges of the Earth*, pp. 45–49; Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, p. 114). But this notion, the opposite ideological construction, as it were, from the view of the Scythians as outrageously barbaric, may have been partly influenced by the literary motif of the Hyperboreans.

⁵¹ Herodotus, *Historiae* iv. 76–80.

Summary and Divergent Views

Despite the scant evidence, it is possible to identify these two main directions taken by the motif in its earliest form: either the Hyperboreans are a Scythian type, or they are supernatural and sacred and live in the north-west. The latter view may have arisen as an intentionally revisionist version, possibly depending on the personal preferences of Pindar. The Pindaric examples predate Plato, Antimachus, Cratinus, and Herodotus, but the examples from Ananius, Hesiod, and possibly 'Aristeas' show that the Scythian understanding of the Hyperboreans predated Pindar and Herodotus.⁵² The western location of the Hyperboreans may also be seen as an expression of the general geographic orientation of the Dorians, and the magical interpretation of their existence may reflect Doric religious sentiment, in which the god Apollo was held in greater honour than among the Ionic Greeks.

Pliny the Elder observes the divergence of Scythian versus western Hyperboreans in the ancient texts: 'verum Asiae quoque magna portio adposita septentrioni iniuria sideris rigens vastas solitudines habet. ab extremo aquilone ad initium orientis aestivi Scythae sunt. extra eos ultraque aquilonis initia Hyperboreos aliqui posuere, pluribus in Europa dictos' (A great portion of Asia however also, adjoining the north, owing to the severity of its frosty climate contains vast deserts. From the extreme north-north-east to the northernmost point at which the sun rises in summer there are the Scythians, and outside of them and beyond the point where north-north-east begins some have placed the Hyperboreans, who are said by a majority of authorities to be in Europe).⁵³ Immediately afterwards he speaks of a people 'Arimphaei, [...] not unlike the Hyperboreans', who are said to be mild-mannered vegetarians, considered holy and affording asylum to fugitives, something which is respected by their neighbours.⁵⁴ This description is almost identical to the one used by Herodotus for the Argippeans, another north Central Asian people of more or less Scythian kind, except for their gentle customs.⁵⁵

⁵² The epic poem *Epigoni*, possibly of the sixth or even seventh century BCE, also featured Hyperboreans according to Herodotus, but nothing more specific is known (*Epigoni* frag. 2, ed. by Bernabé, cit. by Herodotus, *Historiae* IV. 32).

⁵³ Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* VI. 33–34, trans. by Rackham. Pliny in fact himself earlier (IV. 88–89) endorses the version of Herodotus, placing the Hyperboreans north of the Black Sea.

⁵⁴ Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* VI. 34–35, trans. by Rackham.

⁵⁵ Herodotus, *Historiae* IV. 23.

We may finally observe that one more early description of the Hyperboreans exists, which is related to the Arimphaei of Pliny and Argippeans of Herodotus. This description is accordingly eccentric and not possible to sort into either of the two categories identified above. Incidentally, the author is not an Ionic or Doric but an Aeolic Greek, Hellanicus of Lesbos: τοὺς δὲ Ὑπερβορέους Ἑλλάνικος ὑπὲρ τὰ Ριπαῖα ὄρη οἰκεῖν ἱστορεῖ· διδάσκεισθαι δὲ αὐτοὺς δικαιοσύνην μὴ κρεοφαγούοντας, ἀλλ' ἀκροδρόοις χρωμένους. τοὺς ἑξακονταετείς οὗτοι ἔξω πυλῶν ἄγοντες ἀφανίζουσιν (Hellanicus records that the Hyperboreans live above the Ripaeian mountains, and that they profess righteousness through not eating meat, using fruits and nuts for food. They bring their sexagenarians outside the gates and do away with them).⁵⁶

That the Hyperboreans here live beyond a mountain range separates them from the Scythians, wherever this mountain range is imagined to be situated,⁵⁷ but the description is in the realist vein, without suggestions of superiority or supernatural characteristics of the Hyperboreans, and in explicit contrast to the descriptions of extreme longevity in Pindar and perhaps Simonides. In this respect, Hellanicus's description is notable as the oldest and perhaps seminal version of the legendary Nordic *ättestupa* or 'kin precipice', the practice of killing people of one's tribe who have reached a certain venerable age. The verb used in the quotation, *aphanizousin* (do away with, make disappear) is ambiguous, but the Latin grammarian Solinus takes up the motif with regard to the Hyperboreans in what became the canonical version, in which the old men voluntarily throw themselves off a cliff, a version Procopius also later uses in his description of the Thulean Heruls.⁵⁸

Authors of the Hellenistic age used the earlier written sources more or less innovatively to create new literary and faux-historiographical works. An important example with regard to the Hyperboreans is Hecataeus of Abdera, who wrote a comprehensive work *On the Hyperboreans*, lost except for frag-

⁵⁶ Hellanicus, frag. 187b, ed. by Jacoby (*FGrHist* no. 4), cit. by Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata* I. 15.72.2 (≈ frag. 187c, cit. by Theodoretus, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* XII. 44).

⁵⁷ The Ripaeian Mountains, like the river Eridanus (see Hesiod cited above; Herodotus, *Historiae* III. 115; Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* IV. 482–87, 596–617), feature in legendary descriptions of the North in general and Hyperboreans in particular; cf. especially Hippocrates, *De aëre aquis et locis* 19, who claims that Boreas, the North Wind, starts from these mountains. Later writers with more geographical knowledge tried to place them accurately on the map of the world or identify them with known mountains (Protarchus, frag. 1, ed. by Müller; Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* IV. 88; cf. Strabo, *Geographia* VII. 3.295).

⁵⁸ Solinus, *De mirabilibus mundi* 17; Procopius, *De bello gothico* VI. 14.2–3.

ments cited by later authors.⁵⁹ Hecataeus follows the Pindaric, Western version of the myth but places the Hyperboreans on an island, 'opposite the Celtic regions'.⁶⁰ But there is nothing which suggests that later authors had recourse to substantially more material concerning the Hyperboreans and their land than that cited in this article. The new material which appears, for example, the fragments of Boeo in Pausanias, has the semblance of pure innovation for literary or political reasons.⁶¹ More scholarly inclined Hellenistic authors, also preserved in scant fragments, interpret the older texts in light of their increased knowledge of geography, placing for instance the Pindaric Hyperboreans in or beyond the Alps.⁶²

We may conclude on a prosaic note. Apart from the myths of Abaris and the Hyperborean maidens, which could originate in authentic memories of remarkable pilgrims from the north, the Hyperboreans in older literature do not have the appearance of reflecting venerably ancient oral tradition. Rather they are a comparatively late, purely literary construction, based on the stimuli to the imagination provided by the strikingly suggestive name, the 'People beyond the North Wind'.

⁵⁹ Hecataeus Abderita, *De Hyperboreis* test. 6, frags. 7–14, ed. by Jacoby (*FGrHist* no. 264).

⁶⁰ Hecataeus Abderita, *De Hyperboreis* frag. 7, cit. by Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca* II. 47. As opposed to Bridgman, *Hyperboreans*, passim, I think there is an exclusively literary reason for the instances that associate the Hyperboreans with the Celts, namely the tradition from and authority of the major canonical authors followed in the Hellenistic period. Pindar says that the Hyperboreans are to be found near the sources of the Danube, *ergo*, some learned authors conclude that they live in or near the Celtic regions. Others, such as Boeus and Simias fr. 2, ed. by Powell, cit. by Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoses* 20, place them in the east (north of Babylon!), following the Scythian paradigm in Herodotus and other Ionic authorities.

⁶¹ Boeo, frags. 1–2, ed. by Powell, cit. by Pausanias, *Graeciae descriptio* x. 5.7–8. Cf. Sandin, 'Famous Hyperboreans', p. 218.

⁶² Protarchus, frag. 1, ed. by Müller, cit. by Stephanus Byzantius, *Ethnica* s.v. Ὑπερβόρειοι; Posidonius, frag. 70, ed. by Theiler (= frag. 103, ed. by Jacoby, *FGrHist* no. 87), cit. by scholium in Apollonii Rhodii *Argonautica* II. 675.

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INTER IMPERIUM SINE FINE: THULE AND HYPERBOREA IN ROMAN LITERATURE

Lewis Webb¹

The Northern Other

The Far North fascinates. From antiquity to today, explorers, scholars, and poets have characterized it as ‘other’, ‘exotic’, or ‘different’. An exemplar is that of the celebrated Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō, who went on a long journey from Edo to the northern interior of Honshu in the late seventeenth century CE and captured his experiences of this journey in his *Oku no Hosomichi* (*The Narrow Road to the Deep North*). In this work, he composed a haiku that illustrates the allure of the Far North:

風流の (fūryū no)
初やおくの (hajime ya oku no)
田植うた (taueuta).

(The beginning of all art | in the deep north | a rice-planting song).²

¹ I would like to thank Han Baltussen, Eleanor Betts, Jacqueline Clarke, Peter Davis, Ida Östenberg, and Jonas Liliequist for their helpful advice and encouragement. All remaining errors are my own. Classical citations in this chapter follow the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* and *Oxford Latin Dictionary* standards where possible. All Latin is drawn from the PHI Latin corpus, unless otherwise stated; these texts are not included in the bibliography. Where relevant, and for consistency’s sake, I elect to use *v* over *u* in Latin quotations. All translations are cited for the first translation only.

² Bashō, *Bashō’s Journey*, ed. by Barnhill, p. 55.

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For Bashō, art begins in the Far North. In this chapter, I uncover how other authors, namely those of Roman antiquity, were equally fascinated by the Far North and its ‘otherness’ or alterity.

In historical and philosophical discourse, the term ‘other’ is often used to describe the narrative or embodiment of difference; that which is alien or unfamiliar, someone or something to be denigrated or demonized.³ Alterity or ‘otherness’, often constructed or imagined as specific qualities outside civic frameworks, had various permutations in antiquity, including ethnic, political, cultural, gender, or moral. Scholars of antiquity have long studied alterity, in literature and material cultures, in order to emphasize the importance of a centripetal norm to ancient societal structures.⁴ Recent scholarship has focused on the literary utility of alterity for Greek and Roman authors.⁵ This scholarship has shown that these authors would deploy alterity to construct exotic or utopian environments, comment on the socio-political milieu, fit the needs of their genre, and fashion identities for dramatic or rhetorical effect.⁶ In effect, literary alterities are tools of transformation and re-imagination.⁷ Notably, there was a significant interplay between Greek and Roman alterities; for example, Roman authors would frequently draw on Greek alterities and reshape them within a Roman context, adapting them to changing cultural needs.⁸

Two common manifestations of Northern alterity in Greek and Roman literature are Thule⁹ and the land of the Hyperboreans.¹⁰ Thule was an island reputed to be to the far north of Britain, while Hyperborea was a fabled land beyond the North Wind. The Hyperboreans, long-lived, fortunate, and followers of Apollo, feature heavily in Greek texts ranging from archaic poetry to

³ See: Lacan, *Écrits*; Said, *Orientalism*; Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations*; Pagden, *Worlds at War*; Gruen, *Rethinking the Other*.

⁴ See, for example: Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens*; Dauge, *Le Barbare*; Cartledge, *The Greeks*; Zeitlin, *Playing the Other*; Cohen, *Not the Classical Ideal*; Hall, *Hellenicity*; Harrison, *Greeks and Barbarians*; Isaac, *The Invention of Racism*.

⁵ Romm, *The Edges of the Earth*; Rosen and Sluiter, *Valuing Others*; Gruen, *Rethinking the Other*; Woolf, *Tales of the Barbarians*.

⁶ Romm, *The Edges of the Earth*; Gruen, *Rethinking the Other*, but see esp. pp. 3–5, 9–114 [Greek], 115–96 [Roman]; Woolf, *Tales of the Barbarians*, pp. 32–58.

⁷ Gruen, *Rethinking the Other*, pp. 3–5, 115–96.

⁸ Bittarello, ‘The Construction of Etruscan “Otherness”’; Gruen, *Rethinking the Other*, pp. 115–40, 343–57; Woolf, *Tales of the Barbarians*, pp. 32–117.

⁹ Gk. *Θούλη* and L. *Thule/Thyle/Tyle*.

¹⁰ Gk. *Υπερβόρειοι* and L. *Hyperborei*.

historiography and to geography.¹¹ Thule, however, may have been discovered by the Greek explorer Pytheas of Massalia (modern Marseille) in the fourth century BCE. In a work now lost to us, he claims to have journeyed to Thule, an island he located to the far north of Britain.¹² This claim was later revisited and contested by a multitude of Greek and Roman authors throughout antiquity.¹³ Recently, James Romm, Timothy Bridgman, and Rhiannon Evans have comprehensively explored the utopian and religious implications of Hyperborea and its inhabitants; Stan Wolfson and Barry Cunliffe have assessed the evidence for Pytheas's journey to Thule and beyond; and Henry Wijsman, Katherine Clarke, Romm, and Wolfson have underscored the political dimensions of Thule in the early Roman Empire.¹⁴ In this chapter, building upon these studies and those that address alterity in Greek and Roman cultures, I analyse these narrative manifestations of the Far North (Thule, Hyperborea) in Roman literature in order to chart the ways in which they shape and reflect Roman identities.

As various scholars have argued, Hyperborea in Greek literature tends to be portrayed as a utopian and religious location occupied by a fortunate people, while Thule is a contested geographic marker.¹⁵ This chapter will show how these northern alterities are refashioned by Roman authors from Catullus to Sidonius Apollinaris (first century BCE to fifth century CE). In particular, we will see that Thule and Hyperborea are shaped and reshaped into positive and negative symbols of autocratic ambition and Roman identity. I ultimately conclude that, in Roman literature, Thule and Hyperborea are not fixed concepts of northern alterity, but are instead mutable and metonymic.

¹¹ For sources and commentary, see: Romm, *The Edges of the Earth*, pp. 60–67; Evans, 'Searching for Paradise', p. 295; Bridgman, *Hyperboreans*. See also Sandin, 'Scythia or Elysium?' in this volume.

¹² Pytheas apud Polybius, *Historiae*, 34. 5; cf. Strabo, *Geographica*, 2. 5. 8; Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 2. 187.

¹³ For sources and commentary, see: Whittaker, 'The Problem of Pytheas' Thule'; Chevallier, 'The Greco-Roman Conception of the North'; Romm, *The Edges of the Earth*, pp. 121–71; Cunliffe, *The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas*; Wolfson, *Tacitus, Thule and Caledonia*.

¹⁴ Romm, *The Edges of the Earth*, pp. 60–67, 121–71; Wijsman, 'Thule Applied to Britain'; Clarke, 'An Island Nation'; Evans, 'Searching for Paradise', p. 295; Bridgman, *Hyperboreans*; Cunliffe, *Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas*; Wolfson, *Tacitus, Thule and Caledonia*.

¹⁵ For commentary, see: Whittaker, 'The Problem of Pytheas' Thule'; Chevallier, 'The Greco-Roman Conception of the North'; Romm, *The Edges of the Earth*, pp. 60–67, 121–71; Evans, 'Searching for Paradise', p. 295; Bridgman, *Hyperboreans*; Cunliffe, *The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas*. See also Sandin, 'Scythia or Elysium?' in this volume.

Rome and the Far North

From the waning days of the Republic to the end of the Western Roman Empire, Roman authors deployed Thule and Hyperborea in texts across multiple genres, including poetry, astronomy, tragedy, geography, history, and rhetoric.¹⁶ Broadly, Thule and Hyperborea referred to places or peoples in the Far North, but the terms were multivalent. What is clear is that these bywords for the Far North had demonstrable literary currency from Catullus to Sidonius Apollinaris. Roman authors used these terms fluidly to construct utopian,¹⁷ dystopian,¹⁸ and mythical¹⁹ landscapes as well as geographic markers for their texts.²⁰ Thule is not characterized as a utopia within Roman literature; the Roman authors tend to follow the Greek precedent of using it as a geographic

¹⁶ Hyperborea: Catullus, *Carmina*, 115. 6; Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 3. 57. 12; Virgil, *Georgics*, 3. 196, 3. 381, 4. 517; Horace, *Odes*, 2. 20. 16; Hyginus, *Poetica astronomica*, 2. 15. 6. 4; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15. 356; Pomponius, *De chorographia*, 1. 13. 5, 3. 36. 3; Lucan, *Bellum civile*, 5. 23; Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 4. 89. 2, 6. 34. 3, 6. 35. 1, 6. 55. 5, 6. 219. 6; C. Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica*, 8. 210; Statius, *Thebais*, 1. 693, 5. 390, 12. 650; Martial, *Epigrammata*, 4. 3. 5, 7. 6. 1, 8. 78. 3, 9. 45. 1, 9. 101. 20; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 8. 6. 66; Juvenal, *Saturae*, 6. 470; Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 11. 24. 11; Pomponius Porphyryon, *Commentum in Horati Carmina*, 2. 20. 16. 1; Claudian, *In Rufinum*, 2. 240; *Panegyricus de tertio consulatu Honorii Augusti*, 56; *De consulatu Stilichonis*, 3. 256; *Panegyricus de sexto consulatu Honorii Augusti*, 26; *Carmina minora*, 31. 8; Servius, *In Vergilii Aeneidos libros*, 3. 98. 4, 4. 146. 4, 10. 179. 7, 10. 350. 3, 10. 350. 8, 11. 532. 12, 11. 858. 4, 12. 366. 3; *In Vergilii Bucolicon librum*, 8. 27. 3; *In Vergilii Georgicon libros*, 3. 196. 1, 3. 381. 2; Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina*, 5. 493. Thule: Virgil, *Georgics*, 1. 30; Seneca, *Medea*, 379; Pomponius, *De chorographia*, 3. 57. 1; Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 2. 187; 2. 246; 4. 104; 6. 219; Silius Italicus, *Punica*, 3. 597, 17. 416; Statius, *Silvae*, 3. 5. 20, 4. 4. 62, 5. 1. 91, 5. 2. 55; Tacitus, *Agricola*, 10. 6. 2; Juvenal, *Saturae*, 15. 112; Ampelius, *Liber memorialis*, 6. 12. 5; Solinus, *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*, 22. 9; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum gestarum*, 18. 6. 1; Claudian, *In Rufinum*, 2. 242; *Panegyricus de tertio consulatu Honorii Augusti*, 53; *Panegyricus de quarto consulatu Honorii Augusti*, 32; *De consulatu Stilichonis*, 3. 156; *De bello Gothico*, 204; Prudentius, *Hamartigenia*, 881; Rutilius Namatianus, *De reditu*, 1. 499; Servius, *In Vergilii Aeneidos libros*, 4. 103. 14; *In Vergilii Georgicon libros*, 1. 30. 3, 1. 30. 5.

¹⁷ Pomponius, *De chorographia*, 3. 36; Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 4. 89.

¹⁸ Virgil, *Georgics*, 3. 196, 3. 381; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15. 356; Prudentius, *Hamartigenia*, 881.

¹⁹ Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 3. 57; Virgil, *Georgics*, 4. 517; Horace, *Odes*, 2. 20. 16; Hyginus, *Poetica astronomica*, 2. 15. 6. 4; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15. 356; C. Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica*, 8. 210; Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 11. 24. 11.

²⁰ Ampelius, *Liber memorialis*, 6. 12. 5; Solinus, *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*, 22. 9; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum gestarum*, 18. 6. 1.

marker, and the poets characterize it as ‘the last place on earth.’²¹ These authors, unlike their Greek predecessors, rarely represent Hyperborea as a utopia. Instead, they focus on using Thule and Hyperborea as literary lenses on Rome and its autocrats.

All of the texts I will examine were written under autocrats whose ambitions and conquests shaped the world around them. The image of Alexander the Great cast a particularly long shadow over these texts.²² Roman authors interrogated Alexander and his ambition, and he was a model for Julius Caesar and Augustus.²³ The Ocean was used as a symbolic boundary term to signify Alexander’s and Julius Caesar’s desire for conquest;²⁴ Thule and Hyperborea were used similarly as foci of Roman autocratic ambition and *imperium* (power, empire). By highlighting the significant place of these terms in encomia to and criticisms of autocrats and their agents from Julius Caesar to Majorian, I will show that Roman authors used these malleable symbols of northern alterity to valorize and critique Roman and autocratic identities. I will also show that boundless desire is a leitmotif that echoes throughout these narratives.

Imperium sine fine: Encomia

Suitably, our encomia begin with Virgil, who fashions Thule into a symbol of praise. In his *Georgics*, he uses the term as part of a hymnlike encomium to Octavian (sc. Augustus), where remotest Thule stands for the expanse of Octavian’s future *imperium*: ‘tibi serviat ultima Thule’ (Ultima Thule bow down to you).²⁵ Here, Virgil predicts future victories and apotheosis for the young

²¹ As Wolfson insightfully notes, see Wolfson, *Tacitus, Thule and Caledonia*, pp. 14 n. 1, 49. Wolfson points out that the poets place *Thule* at the end of their verses as if to represent the ends of the earth.

²² For the influence of Alexander on Roman literature and *Romanitas* in the Late Republic and Empire, see Spencer, *The Roman Alexander*.

²³ *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 4. 31; Suetonius, *Divus Iulius*, 7; *Divus Augustus*, 18, 50. See Stewart, ‘Inventing Britain’.

²⁴ *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 4. 31; Seneca the Elder, *Suasoriae*, 1; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 3. 8. 16; *Institutio Oratoria*, 7. 4. 2. See: Romm, *The Edges of the Earth*, pp. 121–71; Stewart, ‘Inventing Britain’, pp. 2–10.

²⁵ Virgil, *Georgics*, 1. 30, trans. by Lembke. Context: ‘You equally, Caesar, though we don’t yet know which cohort | of the gods will soon enroll you - whether you’ll wish to keep | cities safe and care for our lands, so the great circling world will | take you as source of earth’s fruits and master of seasons, | placing Venus’ wreath of myrtle around your temples; | whether you

Octavian; he valorizes Octavian's (and Roman) boundless desire for conquest, which encompasses even *ultima Thule*.²⁶ This discourse looks forward both to the famed scene in the *Aeneid*, where Jupiter promises Venus that he will give Aeneas (and his Roman descendants) empire without end, *imperium sine fine*,²⁷ and to Anchises's prophecy of Augustus's supremacy in the *Heldenschau* (pageant of heroes) of the *Aeneid*.²⁸

hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti saepius audis,
 Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet
 saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arva
 Saturno quondam, super et Garamantas et Indos
 proferet imperium; iacet extra sidera tellus
 extra anni solisque vias, ubi caelifer Atlas
 axem umero torquet stellis ardentibus aptum.²⁹

(Here's the man you've heard promised to you so often, he's here now:
 Caesar Augustus, born of a god, who will one day establish
 all through the farmlands of Latium once, long ago, ruled by Saturn,
 Ages of Gold. He'll extend Roman power beyond far Garamantes,
 East beyond India too, to a land that lies under no mapped stars,
 Outside the paths of the year and the sun, where sky-bearing Atlas
 Spins on his shoulders the blaze of the star-studded orb of the heavens.)

In the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*, Virgil predicts that Augustan (and Roman) *imperium* and ambition will be boundless, extending to and even beyond the very limits of the known world, from the northern limits, *ultima Thule*, to lands

shall come as god of the vast sea, and sailors worship | only your holy spirit, Ultima Thule bow down to you' (Virgil, *Georgics*, 1. 24–30). For the identification of Caesar with Octavian and commentary on the poem's encomiastic nature, see: Thomas, *Virgil and the Augustan Reception*, pp. 68–74; *Virgil's Georgics*, ed. Lembke, p. 79; Romm, *The Edges of the Earth*, pp. 158–62.

²⁶ Romm, *The Edges of the Earth*, pp. 158–59.

²⁷ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 1. 279. Context: 'I [Jupiter] am imposing no bounds on his realm, no temporal limits. | Empire that has no ends is my gift' (Virgil, *Aeneid* 1. 278–79, trans. by Ahl). Virgil explicitly connects Augustus with empire without end later in the *Aeneid* (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6. 792–97). On *imperium sine fine* here, see, for example: O'Hara, *Death and the Optimistic Prophecy*, pp. 132–34, 162; Kennedy, 'Virgilian Epic', p. 146.

²⁸ On the *Heldenschau*, see, for example: Grebe, *Die vergilische Heldenschau*; O'Hara, *Death and the Optimistic Prophecy*, p. 131; Pandey, 'Reading Rome from the Farther Shore'. For bibliography and a recent assessment, including connections between these passages, see: Kondratieff, 'Future City in the Heroic Past'. Cf. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth*, pp. 160–61.

²⁹ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6. 791–97.

unmapped, *extra sidera tellus*;³⁰ indeed, in the *Heldenschau*, Anchises foretells that Augustus's deeds shall outdo those of even Hercules and Bacchus.³¹ Essentially, *ultima Thule* as a manifestation of the Far North is part of Virgil's rich encomiastic palette. By deploying Thule in his *Georgics* in a triumphalist manner and foreshadowing *imperium sine fine*, Virgil valorizes autocratic ambition and promotes the topos of boundless desire.

Horace echoes this positive reading of the Far North in his *Odes* 2. 20 by using Hyperborea to refer to the boundlessness of his poetic immortality and Augustan *imperium*. In this poem he seems to employ Plato's image of Orpheus transforming into a swan³² and Ennius's image of Homer transforming into a peacock³³ to construct his own poetic metamorphosis into a swan,³⁴ announcing that his fame flies over even the plains of Hyperborea:

iam Daedaleo notior Icaro
visam gementis litora Bosphori
Syrtisque Gaetulas canorus
ales Hyperboreosque campos.

(Already more famous than Icarus, son of Daedalus,
I shall visit, a harmonious bird, the shores
of the moaning Bosphorus, the Gaetulan Syrtes,
and the Hyperborean plains.)³⁵

Horace may also have drawn on the elegaic poet Theognis's metaphor of flight as fame.³⁶ His metamorphosis while still alive³⁷ serves to highlight his own desire for poetic immortality and transcendence, while simultaneously outlining the extent of Augustan *imperium*.³⁸ Here, the poet plays with the idea of

³⁰ Romm, *Edges of the Earth*, pp. 160–62.

³¹ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6. 801–05.

³² Plato, *Respublica*, 10. 620A.

³³ Ennius, *Annales*, frags 3, 11 (Skutsch).

³⁴ Horace, *Odes*, 2. 20. 1–4, 10. See Erasmo, 'Birds of a Feather?'

³⁵ Horace, *Odes*, 2. 20. 13–16, trans. by West. The poet links himself with Pindar, who he later describes as the Dircean swan (Horace, *Odes*, 4. 2. 25).

³⁶ Theognis, *Elegiae*, 1. 237–54. See: Commager, *The Odes of Horace*, pp. 308–11; Garrison (ed.), *Horace*, pp. 289–90.

³⁷ Horace, *Odes*, 2. 20. 9–13.

³⁸ Explicit in Horace, *Odes*, 2. 20. 17–20. See: Commager, *Odes of Horace*, pp. 308–11; Garrison, *Horace*, p. 289; Erasmo, 'Birds of a Feather?', pp. 373–76.

Hyperborea as a form of self-valorization³⁹ but echoes Virgil's triumphalist discourse on Augustan dominion.⁴⁰ Virgil and Horace set Latin literary precedents for the use of Thule and Hyperborea as positive symbols of autocratic desire.⁴¹

In poems dedicated to Domitian and his agents, the poets Silius, Statius, and Martial echo Virgil's and Horace's use of Thule and Hyperborea. Silius and Statius write Thule into (ostensibly) positive discourses on autocratic ambition. In his *Punica*, Silius recrafts Jupiter's *imperium sine fine* speech from Virgil's *Aeneid*, writing Domitian into a long line of Roman victors.⁴² Silius's Jupiter predicts Vespasian's victory over Thule, 'pater ignotam donabit vincere Thylen' (the father of that family shall give Rome victory over Thule, unknown till then),⁴³ and promises that Domitian will outdo the exploits of his father (Vespasian) and brother (Titus), 'at tu transcendes, Germanice, facta tuorum' (but you, Conqueror of Germany, shalt outdo the exploits of your father and brother)⁴⁴ and 'hic et ab Arctoo currus aget axe per urbem' (he shall drive the triumphal car through Rome after conquering the North).⁴⁵ In so doing, Silius implies that

³⁹ It is tempting to read Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15. 356–59 as a pointed barb at Horace's poetic transformation and flight over Hyperborean plains. Here, in the prosopopeiac voice of Pythagoras, Ovid recounts and discredits a tale of persons transformed into birds by plunging into the waters of Hyperborean Pallene: 'The tale is told how in the northern steppes (*Hyperborea*) | of far Pallene people plunge nine times | into a marshy mere and then their skin | grows downy feathers; that seems past belief' (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15. 356–59, trans. by Melville). Hardie suggests that Ovid is drawing on Empedocles as a model for Pythagoras's teachings, and signalling his close connection to Pythagoras as Lucretius did with Epicurus; see Hardie, 'The Speech of Pythagoras'. Perhaps too, in the voice of Pythagoras, Ovid's critique of Horace has more force.

⁴⁰ For a famous treatment of Virgil, Horace, and Augustus, see Duckworth, 'Supplementary Paper'. For a recent cautious assessment, see Thomas, *Virgil and the Augustan Reception*, pp. 1–73.

⁴¹ Cf. Wolfson, *Tacitus, Thule and Caledonia*, p. 14 n. 1, where he notes that Virgil begins a tradition with Thule that echoes throughout Latin poetry.

⁴² 'A warrior family [the Flavians], reared on the berry that grows in the Sabine land, shall increase the fame of the deified Julii. The father of that family [Vespasian] shall give Rome victory over Thule, unknown till then [...]. But you, Conqueror of Germany [Domitian], shall outdo the exploits of your father and brother [...]. He [Domitian] shall drive the triumphal car through Rome after conquering the North' (Silius Italicus, *Punica*, 3. 597–614, trans. by Duff, modified by author). See: Woodman and Kraus, *Tacitus: Agricola*, p. 138, where Thule is recognized as having a symbolic resonance in this triumphalist discourse.

⁴³ Silius Italicus, *Punica*, 3. 597.

⁴⁴ Silius Italicus, *Punica*, 3. 607.

⁴⁵ Silius Italicus, *Punica*, 3. 614. On this encomiastic language, see: Wolfson, *Tacitus, Thule*

Domitian is the greatest of his line; Thule and the Far North are symbols of Flavian and Domitianic desire for conquest. Similarly, in a consolatory poem to the widow of Abascantus, Domitian's *ab epistulis*,⁴⁶ Statius suggests that Domitian 'videt ille ortus obitusque, quid Auster | quid Boreas hibernus agat' ('sees east and west, what the South Wind is about and [...] the wintry North')⁴⁷ and links him with 'quantum ultimus orbis | cesserit et refugo circumsona gurgite Thule' (how far the world's end has retreated and Thule surrounded by her roaring reflux),⁴⁸ implying that Domitian's gaze is all-encompassing, and that he desires and is able to control the very limits of his empire.⁴⁹ In the following poem,⁵⁰ a panegyric to the youth Vettius Crispinus, Statius encourages Crispinus to follow the martial example of his celebrated father, Vettius Bolanus, a former imperial governor of Britain, by evoking his entrance into Thule:

tu disce patrem, quantusque nigrantem⁵¹
fluctibus occiduis fesso usque Hyperione Thylen
intrarit mandata gerens quantusque potentis
mille urbes Asiae sortito rexerit anno.⁵²

(Learn of your father: in what greatness he entered Thule darkling in the waves of sunset, where Hyperion comes aweary, bearing his commission; how greatly too he governed the thousand cities of mighty Asia for his allotted year, given tempering command.)

and Caledonia, pp. 49–55; Penwill, 'Damn with Great Praise?'; Henriksen, *A Commentary on Martial*, p. xxii, 22, 170–71; Woodman and Kraus, *Tacitus: Agricola*, p. 138. Penwill underscores the potential for irony in this encomia, but this does not detract from the encomiastic use of northern alterity here.

⁴⁶ Flavius Abascantus was Statius's friend and a freedman in charge of Domitian's imperial correspondence (*Augusti libertus ab epistulis*); see Statius, *Silvae*, 5. *praef.*

⁴⁷ Statius, *Silvae*, 5. 1. 81–82, trans. by Shackleton Bailey.

⁴⁸ Statius, *Silvae*, 5. 1. 90–91. See: Wolfson, *Tacitus, Thule and Caledonia*, pp. 48–49.

⁴⁹ On Domitian's control over the world and encomiastic language in Statius's *Silvae*, see: Newlands, *Statius' Silvae*, pp. 18–27; Brunetta, 'Strategies of Encomium', p. 127.

⁵⁰ Statius, *Silvae*, 5. 2.

⁵¹ There is a textual issue in the manuscripts here. Avantius emends *nigrantem*, while Courtney proffers *negantem*, see: Courtney, 'Problems in the *Silvae*'. I will not enter the arguments here, as they have no bearing on this chapter, but will adopt Avantius's *nigrantem* to follow Shackleton Bailey's translation.

⁵² Statius, *Silvae*, 5. 2. 54–57. For Statius and Vettius Crispinus, see Nauta, *Poetry for Patrons*, pp. 216–17. For a comparison between Statius's and Tacitus's image of Vettius Bolanus, see Wolfson, *Tacitus, Thule and Caledonia*, pp. 88–97.

Thule (as a proxy for the Far North) is to be conquered and controlled by emperors and their agents; it is a symbolic landscape on which imperial power is writ large. Equally, in Martial's epigrams, we find Hyperborea used as a symbol of Domitian's northern conquests and the apotheosis of his deceased child:⁵³ Martial's Domitian has borne 'victor Hyperboreo nomen ab orbe' (victorious a name from the Hyperborean world),⁵⁴ meaning here the honorary title *Germanicus* that Domitian adopted owing to his campaign against the Chatti;⁵⁵ Horace's *Hyperborei campi* have been conquered by Domitian. Notably, Martial evokes the encomiastic colour of Virgil's *Heldenschau* by emphasizing that Hercules's acts do not match Domitian's: 'Herculeum tantis numen non sufficit actis' (Hercules's divinity does not match such exploits).⁵⁶ Domitian's martial prowess and ambition exceed all boundaries. Here, these poets demonstrate how important the idea of *imperium sine fine* was for Flavian autocrats and how persistent the motif of boundless desire became.

In the Late Empire, Claudian, Rutilius Namatianus, and Sidonius Apollinaris craft elaborate panegyrics to the last of the Western Roman autocrats wherein Thule and Hyperborea are again positive symbols of autocratic ambition. In a biting invective against Flavius Rufinus, Claudian has Stilicho's soldiers claim that they will follow Stilicho wherever he goes 'vel Hyperboreo damnatam sidere Thylen' (even as far as Thule lying icebound beneath the pole-star),⁵⁷ and that wherever Stilicho is, 'haec patria est' (there is my fatherland).⁵⁸ Here, Virgil's Thule and Horace's Hyperborea are both connected with the *imperium* of Stilicho and *patria* (home, fatherland); northern alterity, empire, and autocratic ambition intertwine with Roman identity. Claudian frequently uses Thule and Hyperborea as lenses on empire and ambition. In a panegyric on Stilicho's consulship, he paints Stilicho as the protector of Rome, acclaims

⁵³ 'For he [Domitian] is wont with dripping locks to weary the stars of Hyperborean Bootes and ignore Helice [Ursa Major]. Who sports with dry waters and plays games from heaven? I suspect these snows come from Caesar's [Domitian's] child'; Martial, *Epigrammata*, 4. 3. 5–8, trans. by Shackleton Bailey. See Martial, *Book IV*, ed. by Soldevila, pp. 108–11.

⁵⁴ Martial, *Epigrammata*, 9. 101. 20.

⁵⁵ For this title, see Henriksen, *A Commentary on Martial*, pp. 23–26, 183. For an encomiastic reading of this, see p. xix, 22, 26–27, 166–84, esp. 183.

⁵⁶ Martial, *Epigrammata*, 9. 101. 23. On this Virgilian echo, see Henriksen, *A Commentary on Martial*, pp. 166–71.

⁵⁷ Claudian, *In Rufinum*, 2. 240, trans. by Platnauer. For an encomiastic reading of Thule in Claudian, see Freeman, *Ireland and the Classical World*, pp. 103–06.

⁵⁸ Claudian, *In Rufinum*, 2. 246.

that ‘veluti patriis regionibus utitur hospes [...] quod cernere Thylen | lusus et horrendos quondam penetrare recessus’ (the world is our home [...] and that to visit Thule and explore its once dreaded wilds is but a sport),⁵⁹ and invokes Virgil’s *imperium sine fine*, declaring that ‘nec terminus umquam | Romanae dicionis erit’ (nor will there ever be a limit to the empire of Rome).⁶⁰ In this same spirit, he praises Theodosius’s and Honorius’s desire for conquest in a panegyric on the latter’s third consulship, declaring that Theodosius was an object of dread to ‘ratibus impervia Thule’ (Thule to where no ship can sail) and that ‘fregit Hyperboreas remis audacibus undas’ (his adventurous oars broke the surface of the northern seas).⁶¹ Essentially, Claudian uses Thule and Hyperborea to praise the *imperium* of Stilicho and Honorius and their desire for conquest.⁶²

In a mode reminiscent of Statius’s praise of Vettius Bolanus, Rutilius Namatianus uses Thule to praise Victorinus, his friend and a former *vicarius* (imperial administrator) of Gaul, acclaiming his authority in distant lands as a model of Roman rule:

conscius Oceanus virtutum, conscia Thule [...]

extremum pars illa quidem discedit in orbem,

sed tamquam media rector in urbe fuit

(Well did the Ocean know his merits, well did the Far North know them [...] that region is parted from us far as earth’s most distant bound, but was its ruler as it might have been in the heart of Rome).⁶³

Similarly, Sidonius Apollinaris uses Hyperborea to praise the unceasing and boundless conquests of Majorian.⁶⁴ These later poets draw on and embellish

⁵⁹ Claudian, *De consulatu Stilichonis*, 3. 155–57.

⁶⁰ Claudian, *De consulatu Stilichonis*, 3. 159–60.

⁶¹ Claudian, *Panegyricus de tertio consulatu Honorii Augusti*, 53, 56, trans. by Platnauer.

⁶² On this reading, see: Freeman, *Ireland and the Classical World*, pp. 103–06.

⁶³ Rutilius Namatianus, *De reditu*, 1. 499, 503–04, trans. by Duff and Duff. On Victorinus and Rutilius, see Drinkwater and Elton, *Fifth-Century Gaul*, pp. 69, 93, 230.

⁶⁴ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina*, 5. 493. Hyperborea is invoked in a discussion about the Huns: ‘Only one race denied you obedience, a race who had lately, in a mood even more savage than usual, withdrawn their untamed host from the Danube because they had lost their lords in warfare, and Tuldila stirred in that unruly multitude a mad lust of fighting for which they must needs pay dear. Hereupon, having scarce laid down your arms, you take them up again; as when the Thracian women fill the frosty land of the Ciconians with Theban troops of revellers, and on the fields by the Strymon or over the slopes of the Rhodope, or where cloudy Hismarus rolls Hebrus down amid the Hyperborean rocks to the sea’; Sidonius Apollinaris,

Virgilian and Horatian models to praise the autocrats of their world; to them, the Far North stands for Roman rule and boundless desire for conquest.

Nimium audax: Criticisms

I turn now to criticisms, which begin with that most invective of Latin poets, Catullus. In Catullus 29, the poet savages the acquisitiveness and *luxus* (excess, extravagance) of Julius Caesar's military officer Mamurra on the British campaign; in so doing, he also attacks Caesar.⁶⁵ Within this invective, he invokes the remoteness and distance of Britain as the location for this activity: 'ultima Britannia [...] ultima occidentis insula' (remotest Britain [...] far island of the west).⁶⁶ Here Catullus sets the Latin literary stage for using remote landscapes as spaces for interrogating the actions of autocrats and their agents.⁶⁷ It is in a similar critique of Mamurra in Catullus 115 that we are introduced to the Hyperboreans; in this poem, Catullus sarcastically compares the size of Mamurra's estate with Croesus's riches,⁶⁸ the Ocean and the land of the Hyperboreans: 'usque ad Hyperboreos et mare ad Oceanum' (far as Oceanus's sea and the Hyperboreans).⁶⁹ Here Catullus intimates that Mamurra's acquisitive desire does not match his ability.⁷⁰ In this poem, Catullus establishes Hyperborea as a negative symbol of boundless desire.

Seneca and Lucan transform the triumphalist discourse of Virgil and Horace into subversive critiques of autocratic ambition. In his *Medea*, Seneca adroitly turns Virgil's image of *ultima Thule* into a symbol of autocratic acquisitiveness in the mouths of his Chorus;⁷¹ such acquisitiveness is boundless, 'nec sit teris

Carmina, 5. 485–93, trans. by Anderson, modified by author. On Sidonius, encomiastic language and Majorian, see: Mathisen, 'Sidonius on the Reign of Avitus'; Rousseau, 'Sidonius and Majorian'. Note Rousseau's suggestion that the poem contains guarded criticism of Majorian.

⁶⁵ Suetonius, *Divus Iulius*, 73.

⁶⁶ Catullus, *Carmina*, 29. 4, 13, trans. by Lee.

⁶⁷ Stewart, 'Inventing Britain', p. 6.

⁶⁸ Cf. Bacchylides's poem on Croesus and his Apollonian transportation from the pyre to the land of the Hyperboreans: Bacchylides, *Epinicia*, 3. 23–62.

⁶⁹ Catullus, *Carmina*, 115. 6. For commentary on this poem and *usque ad Hyperboreos* in particular, see: Ellis, *A Commentary on Catullus*, p. 499; Fordyce, *Catullus*, p. 402; Pavlock, 'Mentula in Catullus 114 and 115'.

⁷⁰ For this reading, see Pavlock, 'Mentula in Catullus 114 and 115'.

⁷¹ Seneca the Younger, *Medea*, 364–79. [Chorus:] 'These days the sea has yielded, | and endures all laws. | No need of a boat framed by Pallas, | bringing home princely rowers, | a

ultima Thule' (and Thule not be the farthest of lands).⁷² *Ultima Thule* is used to illustrate how distant lands and the Ocean have been subdued by Roman *imperium*, and how this is an aggression against and a perversion of the natural order that would lead to chaos.⁷³ Seneca implies that the conquest of distant lands is a form of overreach or hubris; he criticizes such trans-Oceanic conquest as too audacious, *nimum audax*,⁷⁴ and links violence and plunder across the Ocean with punishment and destruction, drawing on the Phaethon myth as an analogy.⁷⁵ Perhaps here, it is the *type* of conquest that matters: for Seneca, conquest sanctioned by an autocrat is driven by ambition and hubris. It is tempting to interpret this text as a critique of Neronian acquisitiveness. Seneca elsewhere uses Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and seafaring conquest as symbols of reckless ambition.⁷⁶ Perhaps, like Livy,⁷⁷ Seneca deems autocratic conquest of the Alexandrian or Caesarian type as ill-motivated in comparison to conquest mediated by the Senate.⁷⁸ Lucan's *Bellum civile* also contains elements that are critical of autocratic ambition.⁷⁹ Lucan inverts Virgil's triumphalist *imperium sine fine* into a symbol of dominance and pessimism.⁸⁰ His hymnic apostrophe to Nero in the proem of Book I is transformed into biting criticism by Book x,⁸¹

famous *Argo*: | any little rowboat wanders over the deep. | All boundaries are removed, and cities | have established their walls in new lands. Nothing is left where it once belonged | by a world open to access. | The Indian drinks the cold Araxes, | Persians the Albis and the Rhine. | There will come an epoch late in time | when Ocean will loosen the bonds of the world | and the earth lie open in its vastness, | when Tethys will disclose new worlds | and Thule not be the farthest of lands' (trans. by Fitch). On this connection, see Wolfson, *Tacitus, Thule and Caledonia*, p. 14.

⁷² Seneca the Younger, *Medea*, 379.

⁷³ Romm, *The Edges of the Earth*, pp. 168–71; Littlewood, *Self-Representation and Illusion*, pp. 167–68.

⁷⁴ Seneca the Younger, *Medea*, 301.

⁷⁵ Seneca the Younger, *Medea*, 599–615.

⁷⁶ Seneca the Younger, *Quaestiones naturales*, 5. 18. 4, 5, 10–12; *Epistulae*, 119. 7.

⁷⁷ Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 9. 17–19.

⁷⁸ Romm, *Edges of the Earth*, pp. 168–71.

⁷⁹ For discussion, see Lucan, *De bello civili*, ed. by Roche, pp. 4–10; Casali, 'The *Bellum Civile*'; Reed, 'The *Bellum Civile*'.

⁸⁰ Lucan, *Bellum civile*, 1. 670–72: 'The peace we long for brings a master. Rome, prolong your chain | of disaster without a break and protract calamity | for lengthy ages: only now in civil war are you free' (trans. by Braund).

⁸¹ Whether or not this hymnic praise in the proem is ironic or critical is a matter of considerable scholarly debate. For bibliography on this debate, see: Lucan, *De bello civili*, ed. by

wherein he draws critical links between the autocratic ambition and desires of Alexander and Julius Caesar.⁸² As part of this discourse, he has Lentulus invoke Hyperborea in Book v as a symbol of the extent of Roman *imperium* and expansion:

nam vel Hyperboreae plastrum glaciale sub Ursae
vel plaga qua torrens claususque vaporibus axis
nec patitur noctes nec iniquos crescere soles,
si fortuna ferat, rerum nos summa sequetur
imperiumque comes.⁸³

(For whether Fortune carries us beneath the icy wagon
of Hyperborean Bear or where the burning zone
and clime enclosed by heat lest neither nights nor days
grow unequal, rule of the state will attend us,
and power will be our companion.)

If we situate this Hyperborean manifestation within Lucan's broader anti-Neronian and anti-expansionist discourse, this ostensibly positive statement about the extent of Roman *imperium* rings hollow.⁸⁴ In the *Bellum civile*, symbols of conquest and expansion become negative symbols of autocratic desire;⁸⁵ the Nile episode in Book x is a classic case.⁸⁶ For Lucan, conquering Hyperborea and the Nile is *nimum audax*. Seneca and Lucan echo Catullus's biting critique of Mamurra's boundless desire.

The geographer Pomponius Mela and the historian Pliny generate positive visions of Hyperborea that can be read as subtle criticisms of autocratic control.⁸⁷

Roche, pp. 5–10. Roche tends towards reading the proem as part of Lucan's systematic criticism of Nero and autocratic ambition, see also pp. 5–10. Cf. Ahl, *Lucan*, pp. 35–54; Henderson, 'Lucan'; Leigh, *Lucan*, pp. 23–26, 55–58, 62, 282, 290–91. *Contra*, see: Lucan, *Civil War*, ed. and trans. by Braund, pp. xiv–xvi; Fantham, *Lucan*, p. 2; Grimal, 'Eulogy of Nero'. Here, I follow Roche in reading the praise as part of Lucan's broader critical aims, given that lines like Lucan, *Bellum civile*, 1. 24–32, 35, 47–50, 63–66, 120–57, 670, 2. 227–32, 284–325, and 3. 108–14 suggest that he worked criticism in from the beginning.

⁸² Romm, *The Edges of the Earth*, pp. 152–56; Manolaraki, 'Noscendi Nilum Cupido'.

⁸³ Lucan, *Bellum civile*, 5. 23–27.

⁸⁴ Reed, 'The *Bellum Civile*', pp. 24–26.

⁸⁵ Manolaraki, 'Noscendi Nilum Cupido', pp. 153–54.

⁸⁶ Lucan, *Bellum civile*, 10. 268–75.

⁸⁷ Pomponius Mela locates the Hyperboreans in Scythia beyond even the Amazons (Pomponius, *De chorographia*, 1. 12–13); indeed, he suggests they live 'beyond the North Wind,

They render Hyperborea as a northern utopia, drawing on Greek precedents, and use Thule as a symbol of the Far North.⁸⁸ Amidst this, they present positive pictures of Hyperborean suicide; this discourse is not found in the Greek precedents. Pomponius and Pliny describe a pastoral utopia that has six months of night and day and is populated with a long-lived happy people, who offer Delian Apollo their first fruits, and who happily kill themselves to end their long lives.⁸⁹ Pomponius and Pliny may be valorizing aristocratic suicides,⁹⁰

above the Rhiphaean mountains, and under the very pole of the stars, where the sun rises' (Pomponius, *De chorographia*, 3. 36, trans. by Romer). In his *Naturalis historia*, Pliny lauds the great conquests of Rome and presents a world tamed by the *pax Romana*, see: Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 14. 2–3, and commentary, Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History*, pp. 2, 5, 15, 24, 50, 69; Woolf, *Tales of the Barbarians*, pp. 59–88 (but note Woolf's cautions against viewing the *Naturalis historia* as entirely apostrophic). Therein, Pliny replicates and refashions a series of Greek and Roman accounts of *Hyperborea*. He draws on several Greek authorities, including Hecataeus, to briefly locate Hyperborea in Scythia (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 6. 34–35; 6. 55; 6. 219), but his ethnographic account of the Hyperboreans is far more elaborate. See Avdagic, 'The North in Antiquity', in this volume.

⁸⁸ Pomponius briefly mentions Thule as one of the distant islands of Britain (Pomponius, *De chorographia*, 3. 52), and, as with Hyperborea, notes its different patterns of light and darkness, including bright nights in the Summer and dark nights in the Winter. Pliny's accounts of Thule (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 2. 187; 2. 246; 4. 104; 6. 219) are fairly bare toponymic descriptions that draw on Pytheas and Isidorus; in these accounts he locates the island of Thule six days north of Britain, explains how it has an alternating six months of nights and days (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 2. 187; 4. 104; 6. 219), and refers to it as the most remote of island (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 4. 104). He also locates Thule close to Hyperborea in Scythia (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 6. 219), as Pomponius.

⁸⁹ Pomponius, *De chorographia*, 3. 36; Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 4.89. Pomponius: 'The Hyperboreans inhabit groves and forests, and when a sense of having been satisfied by life (rather than boredom) has gripped them, they cheerfully wreath themselves in flowers and actually throw themselves into the sea from a particular cliff. For them that is the finest death ritual' (Pomponius, *De chorographia*, 3. 36, trans. by Romer). In this passage, Pomponius seems to draw on the utopian models of Hyperborea crafted by Pindar (*Pythian odes*, 10. 29–44), Herodotus (*Historiae*, 4. 32–55) and Hecataeus (apud Strabo, *Geographia*, 15. 1. 57) to paint a picture of a fortunate and pious people, see Evans, 'Searching for Paradise', p. 295. Pliny: 'Death comes to them only when, owing to satiety of life, after holding a banquet and anointing | their old age with luxury, they leap from a certain rock into the sea: this mode of burial is the | most blissful; Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 4. 89, trans. by Rackham). Pliny draws explicitly on Pomponius. He paints a picture of a utopian pastoral landscape, located beyond the Rhiphaean mountains and beyond the North Wind (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 4. 89), that is populated with a happy people, *gens felix* (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 4. 89), who offer their firstfruits to Delian Apollo, and who commit suicide at the ends of their lives.

⁹⁰ Pomponius may betray his Stoic and perhaps familial confluence with Seneca here, see: *Description of the World*, ed. by Romer, pp. 3–4; Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History*, pp. 120–21.

a theme that finds analogues in Livy, Seneca, Tacitus, Plutarch, and other authors.⁹¹ They do not make a clear link between autocratic tyranny and suicide, as Livy and the others, but their careful silence is pregnant. Murphy has shown that Pliny in particular sets the Hyperboreans up as a utopian community on which to project desires;⁹² their happy suicides provide a window into Pliny's complicated milieu. While Pliny certainly lauds Roman power in his work,⁹³ his use of the Far North to talk about happy suicides betrays a wistfulness for an altered state. Pomponius and Pliny provide us with a window into life in Rome under Claudius, Nero, and Vespasian; suicide was, perhaps, one of the only ways for aristocrats to free themselves from autocratic control.

In the *Agricola*, the Roman historian Tacitus uses an encomium to Agricola, his father-in-law, to criticize Domitianic tyranny. He paints Britain as a place at the edge of the earth where Agricola is free from Domitianic control, free to be virtuous, heroic, and truly Roman.⁹⁴ Here he creates a semi-fictitious landscape populated by ferocious barbarians⁹⁵ that Agricola has circumnavigated and governed with bravery, mercy, and no desire for praise.⁹⁶ This is in stark contrast to his savage criticism of Domitianic tyranny and acquisitiveness,⁹⁷ out of which emerges the tyranny of the emperor's gaze, 'praecipua sub Domitiano miseriarum pars erat videre et aspici [...] saevus ille vultus' (a special torment under Domitian was to see him watching us [...] that savage gaze),⁹⁸ recalling

⁹¹ Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 1. 58–59; Seneca, *Epistulae*, 58. 34–35, 70. 14–15, 24; Tacitus, *Annales*, 16. 19; Plutarch, *Cato Minor*, 68–71. For commentary and other authors, see: Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History*, pp. 120–25, 128.

⁹² Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History*, pp. 120–28.

⁹³ Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History*. But again note Woolf's cautions against an entirely apostrophic reading; see Woolf, *Tales of the Barbarians*, pp. 59–88.

⁹⁴ Tacitus, *Agricola*, 10–19. See: Woolf, *Tales of the Barbarians*, p. 91.

⁹⁵ Tacitus, *Agricola*, 11–12, 16. Britain was, in fact, well populated and urban; this is a Tacitean fiction; see Woolf, *Tales of the Barbarians*, p. 91.

⁹⁶ Tacitus, *Agricola*, 18–19. See, for example: 'So, after they had petitioned for peace and surrendered the island [Mona], Agricola was now regarded as a famous and a great man: on his entry into the province, a period which others spend in pageantry and soliciting attention, he had preferred toil and danger. Agricola did not exploit his success to glorify himself but described his campaign and victory as "keeping a conquered people under control." He did not even use laurel-wreathed dispatches to report on his action. But the very act that he disguised his fame actually made him more famous'; Tacitus, *Agricola*, 18. 6–7, trans. by Birley.

⁹⁷ Tacitus, *Agricola*, 1–3, 44–46.

⁹⁸ Tacitus, *Agricola*, 45. 2.

Domitian's gaze and control in Statius's *Silvae*, 'videt ille ortus obitusque' (he sees east and west).⁹⁹ Indeed, the gaze is related to Thule: amidst an account of Agricola's circumnavigation and subjugation of Britain's north-western islands, Tacitus refers to the observation or discernment of Thule — 'dispecta est et Thule, quia hactenus iussum, et hiems adpetebat' (Thule was thoroughly viewed, as well, but no more, for the fleet's orders were to go no further, and winter was approaching)¹⁰⁰ — and to the sea as a barrier to rowers: 'sed mare pigrum et grave remigantibus perhibent ne ventis quidem perinde attolli' ('it is reported, however, that the sea there is sluggish and difficult for the rowers, and is not even stirred up by the winds as happens elsewhere').¹⁰¹ Here Thule stands for the limits of Roman conquest and as a boundary that was not and should not be crossed by Agricola.¹⁰² For Tacitus, Agricola is a man who knows his limits; his desire is not boundless, unlike Domitian's. North was a positive space where a Roman could be a Roman, free from autocratic control. Virgil's *imperium sine fine* is entirely inverted here; for Tacitus, it is at the boundaries of the empire that true *Romanitas* (Roman identity) resides, where ambition is tempered and the tyrant's gaze absent.

The Mutable and Metonymic North

Roman authors used Thule and Hyperborea as mirrors to reflect their thoughts about Rome and its rulers. The Far North stood for the limits of Roman desire and power; it was a malleable literary space that could both herald a cherished

⁹⁹ Statius, *Silvae*, 5. 1.81. On Statius's *Silvae* and Tacitus's *Agricola*, see Wolfson, *Tacitus, Thule and Caledonia*, pp. 88–97. Wolfson argues that Tacitus inverts Statius's positive image of Vettius Bolanus (Statius, *Silvae*, 5. 2) at Tacitus, *Agricola*, 8.1, 16.5 in order to praise Agricola. Tacitus is clearly interested in inversion in the *Agricola* (of Domitian's gaze, of the character of Vettius Bolanus, of Virgil's *imperium sine fine*, of what it is to be Roman).

¹⁰⁰ Tacitus, *Agricola*, 10. 6.

¹⁰¹ Tacitus, *Agricola*, 10. 6. For commentary on this passage, see: Wolfson, *Tacitus, Thule and Caledonia*; Woodman and Kraus, *Tacitus: Agricola*, pp. 138–39. Wolfson argues for a different reading of this passage, namely, that Agricola's fleet did reach Thule (the Shetlands in his reading), see: Wolfson, *Tacitus, Thule and Caledonia*, pp. 29–34. In order to read it in this manner, he argues for a manuscript transcription problem, which has been criticized by Woodman and Kraus, *Tacitus: Agricola*, p. 139. In particular, Wolfson ignores the force of *hactenus* ('thus far and no farther' or 'only' according to Woodman and Kraus, *Tacitus: Agricola*, p. 139) and the notion of human (orders) and natural forces (winter and the sea) as barriers.

¹⁰² Romm, *The Edges of the Earth*, pp. 148–49. For Thule as primarily symbolic here, see Woodman and Kraus, *Tacitus: Agricola*, p. 138.

Augustan ideal and deplore autocratic acquisitiveness. Virgil and Horace praise Augustus's boundless desire for conquest and inspire numerous poets to echo this motif, whilst Seneca, Lucan, and Tacitus raise the spectre of hubris and destructive ambition. Textual echoes abound; Virgil's encomiastic *ultima Thule* and Horace's Hyperborea are embellished, expanded, and inverted, with *imperium sine fine* emerging as a unifying theme. In the examined instances, authors do not denigrate the northern 'other'; instead, to borrow Erich Gruen's phrase, 'it is not rejection, denigration, or distancing — but rather appropriation'.¹⁰³ Thule and Hyperborea, recurrent manifestations of northern alterity throughout Greek literature, were appropriated and transformed by Roman authors, not to disparage or praise northern societies, but as a self-reflexive discourse on Roman *imperium* and autocrats. Essentially, Thule and Hyperborea were not particularly dystopian or utopian spaces for Roman authors but, instead, were useful metonyms for Rome. Northern alterity was a powerful literary tool, for the 'edges of the world and the empire were good to think with'.¹⁰⁴

We have seen that Roman authors used Thule and Hyperborea as metonyms for Rome and its rulers. The mutability of these terms allowed them to both praise and criticize Roman and autocratic identities. The very limits of the earth were linked with boundless desire; Rome expanded and so too did the ambitions of its rulers. For Roman authors, writing about Thule and Hyperborea was a way to raise questions about the tension between acquiring *imperium sine fine*, empire without end, and being *nimium audax*, too hubristic. The vitality and longevity of these terms demonstrate the centrality of these ideas to *Romanitas*.

In closing, I offer my own verse inspired by the Far North in Roman literature as abundantly mutable and metonymic, a fascinating landscape wherein Roman identities could be interrogated, praised, and critiqued:

of lands furthest north,
within empire without end,
Aeneadae sing.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Gruen, *Rethinking the Other*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Woolf, *Tales of the Barbarians*, p. 92.

¹⁰⁵ Sons of Aeneas, sc. Romans.

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THE NORTH IN ANTIQUITY: BETWEEN MAPS AND MYTHS

Mirela Avdagic

Introduction

The story I am about to tell is the story of the ancient North as it was imagined by Greek and Roman geographers in the time period that spanned from the first century BCE to the sixth century CE. This is a story filled with numerous legendary and historical tribes, the northern sky and its midnight suns and polar nights, and the tremendous mythical ocean, called the ‘father of Gods’, that surrounded the northernmost lands and the world itself. At the beginning of our journey to the areas that some ancient authors designated as the lands beyond the North Wind, we need to bear a few things in mind. When we think about concepts and perceptions of geography — namely, maps and places — we may have the tendency to consider geography strictly as a scientific discipline, a set of rules that implies an understanding of longitudes and latitudes, precise location of settlements, and natural landscapes. Classical civilizations, however, had far more fluid ways of understanding geography. In ancient times, geographical works analysed the physical world from different angles including a metaphysical approach. Likewise, our modern understanding of mythology, as well as literary media that transfer myth, may lead us to label myth simply as a category of unrealistic, supramundane tales whose primary purpose is obscure. Mythology in the classical world, however, was anything but unreal.

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This chapter examines the concept of the classical North as envisioned by people who can be labelled as geographers in the broadest sense of the word:¹ Strabo, Mela, Pliny the Elder, and Diodorus of Sicily in classical antiquity; and Procopius and Jordanus in late antiquity. The designation 'North' is taken to mean the inhabited and uninhabited regions in the Far North as understood by Romans and Greeks. This means that in this essay, the term 'North' will cover modern Scandinavia, the extreme north of Germany, the Arctic or North Pole, and the imaginary islands of Thule and Hyperborea. In an attempt to provide a comprehensive understanding of the overall idea of North, accounts of both peoples and celestial manifestations, that is, polar days and nights, are included. Scattered information on North is found in different genres of the literature of classical and late antiquity. Representations of North can be found in geographies, ethnographies, histories, and mythical narratives that are common to the majority of all previously mentioned genres. Envisioning ancient concepts of the world is a challenging task, especially when we are faced with a scarcity of literary materials. Factual geographical knowledge about the North in ancient times was almost nonexistent, but this should not be taken as proof of the impossibility of representation because the classical concept of knowledge and factual knowledge stood somewhere between knowing and believing. Here, by choosing authors from both classical times and late antiquity, the aim is to see if and how historical and cultural changes, as well as the availability of new information, might have affected perceptions. The authors from late antiquity are, to a certain extent, more reliable in terms of the factual information they provide, since in the fifth and sixth centuries CE, contacts with the Far North were more frequent. However, dealing with earlier periods shows us that facts and myths were not necessarily polar opposites in classical times and that any attempt to analyse them is far more complicated than it may appear at first instance. In general, this paper will try to place the concept of North exactly where it was in ancient times: somewhere between maps and myths.

Placing the Classical North on Maps

Ancient maps derived from philosophical discourse and geographical works, and according to the written tradition, the first map was made by Anaximander

¹ There is a very little research in this field. See two of the most important studies: Chevallier, 'The Greco-Roman Conception of the North'; Dilke, 'Geographical Perceptions of the North'.

of Miletus in the sixth century BCE.² Maps in the modern sense of the word — with scaled representations of geographical features — did not exist in antiquity, as the concept and nature of maps were essentially different. The only maps that we actually have from ‘antiquity’ were in fact created during the Renaissance, more than a thousand years later than the geographical works that they represent were originally conceived. However, we must not let this fact lead us to conclude that there were no maps at all. Ancient maps were constructed for studying, categorizing, and consecutively mapping information and knowledge about the world that surrounds us.³ The majority of maps that existed in classical times were city plans and representations of the inhabited world, which makes our attempt to understand and reconstruct the spatial orientation within maps and in the classical concept of North more challenging. Since the original ancient maps were lost, we are left to draw conclusions about their nature and specific locations from descriptions and interpretations written by classical authors. The ancient geographer’s understanding of geography, and his idea of what a geographer should do, reveals the multiple meanings of spatial distribution, the complex process of making maps, and the role played by maps in ancient times.

At the beginning of *The Geography*, Strabo unveils his philosophy about the geographer. The map that he creates is not only formed from parallels and meridians: he strives to present life in a given area in all aspects, including physical characteristics of terrain, flora and fauna, and indigenous population. He believes that geography is no different from philosophy, since they share a mutual goal: the understanding of the art of life and the eternal human preoccupation for the quest for happiness.

ἢ τε πολυμάθεια, δι’ ἧς μόνης ἐφικέσθαι τοῦδε τοῦ ἔργου δυνατόν, οὐκ ἄλλου τινός ἐστιν ἢ τοῦ τὰ θεῖα καὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια ἐπιβλέποντος, ὥνπερ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιστήμην φασίν. ὥς δ’ αὐτως καὶ ἡ ὠφέλεια ποικίλη τις οὖσα, ἡ μὲν πρὸς τὰ πολιτικά καὶ τὰς ἡγεμονικὰς πράξεις, ἡ δὲ πρὸς ἐπιστήμην τῶν τε οὐρανίων καὶ τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς καὶ θαλάττης ζώων καὶ

² See: Talbert, *Ancient Perspectives*, pp. 83; This is also mentioned by Strabo: Eratosthenes declares that the first two successors of Homer were Anaximander, a pupil and fellow-citizen of Thales, and Hecataeus of Miletus; that Anaximander was the first to publish a geographical map; and that Hecataeus left behind him a work on geography, a work believed to be his by reason of its similarity to his other writings. See: Strabo 1.1.11.

³ For the history of cartography, see Harley and Woodward, *The History of Cartography*. In this context, Ptolemy’s *Guide to Geography* stands out as the most prominent focus point, for he is called the father of cartography.

φυτῶν καὶ καρπῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσα ἰδεῖν παρ' ἐκάστοις ἔστι, τὸν αὐτὸν ὑπογράφει ἄνδρα, τὸν φροντίζοντα τῆς περὶ τὸν βίον τέχνης καὶ εὐδαιμονίας.

(In the second place, wide learning, which alone makes it possible to undertake a work on geography, is possessed solely by the man who has investigated things both human and divine — knowledge of which, they say, constitutes philosophy. And so, too, the utility of geography — and its utility is manifold, not only as regards the activities of statesmen and commanders but also as regards knowledge both of the heavens and of things on land and sea, animals, plants, fruits, and everything else to be seen in various regions — the utility of geography, I say, presupposes in the geographer the same philosopher, the man who busies himself with the investigation of the art of life, that is, of happiness.)⁴

Similarly, he perceives the task of the geographer as twofold: to present the shape and size of a certain geographical area, including an essential description of nature found there, and to place this area into a wider perspective, that is, the whole earth.⁵ Therefore, Strabo values spatial orientation within maps as being of equal importance to the characteristics of that space. Terrestrial mapping was not a goal in itself in the ancient world. Descriptive mapping through literary works was intended to inform, prepare, and direct a deeper understanding of both macro- and microcosmos.

In large-scale mapping, the position of North was important as a means of general orientation, but beyond this, we can find a multitude of aspects which reveal attitudes that Greek and Roman authors had about themselves and others. The geographical notion of North was a starting point for building up a set of ideas in which one could discover what North meant in the Greek and Roman worlds. When it comes to describing North in antiquity, there are virtually no accounts based on personal, first-hand experience; instead, they rely on the transfer of tradition and on hearsay. Lack of reliable evidence, however, did not stop ancient authors from portraying the North. Strabo considered word-of-mouth accounts for regions of the world that he had not personally visited to be equally useful because they provide a basis for creating a 'concept' (ἡ διάνοια) of a place:

τὸ μέντοι πλεον κάκεινοι καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀκοῇ παραλαβόντες συντίθεμεν καὶ τὸ σχῆμα καὶ τὸ μέγεθος καὶ τὴν ἄλλην φύσιν ὅποια καὶ ὅποση, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ὥνπερ ἡ διάνοια ἐκ τῶν αἰσθητῶν συντίθησι τὰ νοητά: σχῆμα γὰρ καὶ χροάν καὶ μέγεθος μήλου καὶ ὁδμήν

⁴ Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, I.1.1. Translations of Strabo are from the edition *The Geography of Strabo*, ed. and trans. by Jones.

⁵ Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, II.5.13.

καὶ ἀφ' ἧν καὶ χυμὸν ἀπαγγέλλουσιν αἱ αἰσθήσεις, ἐκ δὲ τούτων συντίθῃσιν ἡ διάνοια τὴν τοῦ μῆλου νόησιν: καὶ αὐτῶν δὲ τῶν μεγάλων σχημάτων τὰ μέρη μὲν αἰσθήσις ὁρᾷ, τὸ δ' ὅλον ἐκ τῶν ὁραθέντων ἡ διάνοια συντίθῃσιν.

(However, the greater part of our material both they and I receive by hearsay and then form our ideas of shape and size and also other characteristics, qualitative and quantitative, precisely as the mind forms its ideas from sense impressions—for our senses report the shape, colour, and size of an apple, and also its smell, feel, and flavour; and from all this the mind forms the concept of apple. So, too, even in the case of large figures, while the senses perceive only the parts, the mind forms a concept of the whole from what the senses have perceived.)⁶

According to Strabo, the mind overrules the senses: the concept moulded in the intellect provides complete understanding of certain matters, which in return outweighs the senses.

Whether in accepting or denying their reports, Strabo draws heavily on excerpts from Homer, Pythias, Heracleitus, and Eratosthenes in writing his idea of North. It is widely accepted that he knew almost nothing about areas north of Pontus Euxinus,⁷ and, moreover, he had marginal interest in describing these regions because for him they were neither part of what he considered to be the inhabited world (οἰκουμένη),⁸ nor did they pose any real threat to the Roman Empire.⁹ Throughout his work, he speculates about the North with his sources, recreating northern boundaries in accordance with his assumptions.

Pomponius Mela, however, in *The Chorography* rethinks the North. Mela is far less clear about the sources of his information. His description of Hyperboreans probably relies on Eratosthenes, who is considered to be the general source for the majority of the work. However, the very nature of Mela's work explains the obscurity which surrounds his sources: chorography was mainly concerned with description, with little need for data analysis. The primary goal was to present the inhabited world in the way that a picture would:

⁶ Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, II.5.11.

⁷ See Bunbury, *A History of Ancient Geography*.

⁸ The concept of a habitable world originates from classical and Hellenistic writers. See Talbert, *Ancient Perspectives*, pp. 113.

⁹ 'πρὸς τε τὰς ἡγεμονικὰς χρείας οὐδὲν ἂν εἴη πλεονέκτημα τὰς τοιαύτας γνωρίζειν χώρας καὶ τοὺς ἐνοικοῦντας, καὶ μάλιστα εἰ νήσους οἰκοῖεν τοιαύτας, αἱ μὴτε λυπεῖν μῆτ' ὠφελεῖν ἡμᾶς δύνανται μηδὲν διὰ τὸ ἀνεπίπλεκτον' (And for governmental purposes there would be no advantage in knowing such countries and the inhabitants, and particularly if the people live in islands which are of such a nature that they can neither injure nor benefit us in any way because of their isolation); Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, II.5.8.

vivid, imaginative representation filled with details. The concept of geography, and more indirectly, the concept of North in Mela's eyes represented a work of imagination, not analysis. This concept was open for subsequent development, without any solid structure that would have prevented it.

With Pliny, interesting differences arise. Pliny the Elder speaks with authority as an experienced Roman soldier. Whether his account on the characteristics of the Scandinavian Peninsula represents his authentic experience or is copied from others is unclear; in any case, the question of authenticity is not of crucial importance here. The way he presents his idea of the North is what concerns us more: Pliny strives to provide concise information on the North, without deeper analysis. He states his information confidently and does not leave space for speculation and doubt. What emerges from his idea of the Far North is that there were two notions in ancient times: the 'known North' and the 'North through hearsay'.¹⁰

The antique writers, in most cases, depended on prior scholarship: Diodorus's tales about Hyperboreans are based on 'Hecateus and certain others',¹¹ Jordanus's *Getica* is an abridgement of Cassiodorus' work, and Procopius, as he states himself, did not have a chance to visit Thule but his account originated in stories of people who came from the alleged island. In their quests for understanding unknown territories, the majority of these authors rely on two extremes: alleged factual geographical knowledge, on the one hand, which led to meticulous analysis of their statements (for example, Strabo criticized Pythias and Eratosthenes), and, on the other hand, blind reliance on the tradition of mythical narratives without speculation and criticism. When it comes to the history of ancient geography, not many of the works have come down to us in their full extent. The texts are found only as excerpts within other texts. It should be noted that the development of geography as a discipline was closely connected to the expansion of the Roman Empire, and the writers were engaged in describing the 'inhabited world' and 'known world' to meet the needs of the growing Empire. This area needed to be known, whether that was through maps or myths. The concept of *terrae incognitae*, in this case Northern Europe, was in ancient times a borderline area between knowledge and beliefs.

¹⁰ Pliny, *Naturalis Historiae* iv.16.102–04.

¹¹ 'τῶν γὰρ τὰς παλαιὰς μυθολογίας ἀναγεγραφότων Ἑκαταῖος καὶ τινες ἕτεροὶ φασιν ἐν τοῖς ἀντιπέρασ τῆς Κελτικῆς τόποις κατὰ τὸν ὠκεανὸν εἶναι νῆσον οὐκ ἐλάττω τῆς Σικελίας' (Of those who have written about the ancient myths, Hecataeus and certain others say that in the regions beyond the land of the Celts there lies in the ocean an island no smaller than Sicily); Diodorus, *Library of History*, 11.47, trans. by Oldfather.

The Physical Place of North

That the world is surrounded by Oceanus seemed to be consensus beyond dispute in classical times. Almost without exception, all of our authors speak of it. Strabo supporting Homer's view says: 'καὶ πρῶτον μὲν τῷ ὠκεανῷ περικλυστον, ὥσπερ ἔστιν, ἀπέφαινεν αὐτήν' (In the first place, Homer declares that the inhabited world is washed on all sides by Oceanus and this is true)¹² and continues later:

καὶ ἄλλως δ' ἐμφαίνει τὸ κύκλῳ περικεῖσθαι τῇ γῇ τὸν ὠκεανόν, ὅταν οὕτω φῇ ἡ Ἥρα 'εἴμι γὰρ ὄψομένη πολυφόρβου πείρατα γαίης Ὠκεανόν τε θεῶν γένεσιν.' τοῖς γὰρ πέρασι πᾶσι συνήθη λέγει τὸν ὠκεανόν, τὰ δὲ πέρατα κύκλῳ περικείται.

(In other ways, too, Homer indicates that Oceanus surrounds the earth, as when Hera says as follows: 'For I am going to visit the limits of the bountiful Earth, and Oceanus, father of the gods.' By these words he means that Oceanus touches all the extremities of the earth; and these extremities form a circle round the earth.)¹³

However, Strabo also argues that there is something other than Oceanus at the edge in the North. Interpreting the reports on the Bear constellation by Homer and Heraclitus, he says that Oceanus surrounds the Arctic Circle touching the earth at its most northerly inhabited point. Strabo further explains Homer's view by claiming that Homer, through the designation 'the Bear constellation', in fact meant the Arctic Circle.¹⁴ In this way, he introduces the Arctic Pole as one more marker of the extreme North. In supporting his view on the Arctic Pole, Strabo also quotes Heraclitus, who allegedly asserts the same; the meaning of 'the Bear constellation' is made equivalent to the Arctic Circle.¹⁵ In fur-

¹² Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, 1.1.3.

¹³ Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, 1.1.7.

¹⁴ 'ὅτι δὲ καὶ ἡ πρὸς ταῖς ἄρκτοις ἐσχατιὰ παρωκεανίτις ἐστιν, οὕτως ἠνίξατο εἰπὼν περὶ τῆς ἄρκτου 'οἷη δ' ἄμμορός ἐστι λοετρῶν ὠκεανοῖο.' διὰ μὲν γὰρ τῆς ἄρκτου καὶ τῆς ἀμάξης τὸν ἀρκτικὸν δηλοῖ' ('He (Homer) left us to infer that the farthest land in the north is also bounded by Oceanus when he says of the constellation Bear that 'She alone hath no part in the baths of Oceanus.' That is, by the terms 'Bear' and 'Wain' he means the 'arctic circle'); Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, 1.1.6.

¹⁵ Strabo also adds: 'βελτίων δ' Ἡράκλειτος καὶ ὁμηρικώτερος, ὁμοίως ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀρκτικοῦ τὴν ἄρκτον ὀνομάζων' (Better and more Homeric is Heraclitus, who likewise employs 'the Bear' for 'the Arctic Circle') and then immediately includes Heraclitus's quote: 'ἡοὺς καὶ ἐσπέρης τέρματα ἡ ἄρκτος, καὶ ἀντίον τῆς ἄρκτου οὖρος αἰθρίου Διός.' ὁ γὰρ ἀρκτικός ἐστι δύσεως καὶ ἀνατολῆς ὄρος, οὐχ ἡ ἄρκτος' (The Bear forms limits of morning and evening, and over against the Bear fair breezes blow from fair skies; for the arctic circle, and not the Bear, forms a boundary beyond which the stars neither rise nor set); *The Geography of Strabo*, 1.1.6.

ther discussing North, Strabo also analyses accounts about Thule. He believes that the geographical position of Thule set out by Eratosthenes, which Pythias placed as a six-day sail northward from Britain and in the vicinity of the Frozen Ocean (‘ἤν φησι Πυθέας ἀπὸ μὲν τῆς Βρεττανικῆς ἕξ ἡμερῶν πλοῦν ἀπέχειν πρὸς ἄρκτον, ἐγγὺς δ’ εἶναι τῆς πεπηγυίας θαλάττης’),¹⁶ is not accurate. He even questions the geographical existence of Thule, stating that this region, which is supposed to be in close vicinity to Ierne,¹⁷ is sparsely populated:¹⁸

ο μὲν οὖν Μασσαλιώτης Πυθέας τὰ περὶ Θούλην τὴν βορειοτάτην τῶν Βρεττανίδων ὕστατα λέγει, παρ’ οἷς ὁ αὐτός ἐστι τῷ ἀρκτικῷ ὁ θερινὸς τροπικὸς κύκλος· παρὰ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων οὐδὲν ἱστορῶ, οὐθ’ ὅτι Θούλη νῆσός ἐστί τις οὐτ’ εἰ τὰ μέχρι δεῦρο οἰκήσιμά ἐστιν, ὅπου ὁ θερινὸς τροπικὸς ἀρκτικὸς γίνεται. νομίζω δὲ πολὺ εἶναι νοτιώτερον τοῦτο τὸ τῆς οἰκουμένης πέρας τὸ προσἀρκτιον· οἱ γὰρ νῦν ἱστοροῦντες περαιτέρω τῆς Ἰέρνης οὐδὲν ἔχουσι λέγειν, ἢ πρὸς ἄρκτον πρόκειται τῆς Βρεττανικῆς πλησίον, ἀγρίων τελέως ἀνθρώπων καὶ κακῶς οἰκούντων διὰ ψύχος, ὥστ’ ἐνταῦθα νομίζω τὸ πέρας εἶναι θετέον.

(Now Pytheas of Massilia tells us that Thule, the most northerly of the Britannic Islands, is farthest north, and that there the circle of the summer tropic is the same as the Arctic Circle. But from the other writers I learn nothing on the subject — neither that there exists a certain island by the name of Thule, nor whether the northern regions are inhabitable up to the point where the summer tropic becomes the Arctic Circle. But in my opinion the northern limit of the inhabited world is much farther to the south than where the summer tropic becomes the Arctic Circle. Any country north of Ierne, which lies to the north of Britain and near thereto, and is the home of men who are complete savages and lead a miserable existence because of the cold; and therefore, in my opinion, the northern limit of our inhabited world is to be placed there.)¹⁹

In Book IV, he further adds that the existence of Thule is uncertain due to its geographical seclusion.²⁰ We can conclude that Strabo personally did not accept Thule’s existence per se; he simply transmitted information that had

¹⁶ Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, I.4.2.

¹⁷ Ierne is equated with modern Ireland.

¹⁸ ‘ὅ τε γὰρ ἱστορῶν τὴν Θούλην Πυθέας ἀνὴρ ψευδίστατος ἐξήτασται, καὶ οἱ τὴν Βρεττανικὴν καὶ Ἰέρνην ἰδόντες οὐδὲν περὶ τῆς Θούλης λέγουσιν, ἀλλὰς νήσους λέγοντες μικρὰς περὶ τὴν Βρεττανικὴν.’ (For not only has the man who tells about Thule, Pytheas, been found, upon scrutiny, to be an arch-falsifier, but the men who have seen Britain and Ierne do not mention Thule, though they speak of other islands, small ones, about Britain;) Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, I.4.3.

¹⁹ Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, II.5.8.

²⁰ Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, IV.5.5.

been passed on by other writers.²¹ Two geographical components of the concept of the North emerge in Strabo's text: first, there is the northernmost point on the horizon, that is, the Arctic Circle; and second, there is an inhabited north, Ierne (Ireland).

Pomponius Mela, however, in describing the known world, sets as the farthest point North the Britannic Ocean, since, in his opinion, Thule is located near the coast of Belcae,²² north-west of modern Belgium. Pliny considers Thule to be the remotest recorded British island, with the Frozen Ocean (Cronium) lying beyond it.²³ In Procopius's account, Thule lies far away from Britain to the north, but he does not set it specifically as the northern boundary either of *ecumene* or the known world.

Geographically speaking, all of the writers were vague about this area north of Britain until we reach the account of Pythias, who is said to be the only person to travel to the northernmost lands on the horizon, including Thule.²⁴ Another mention of Thule as the northernmost point comes again from someone who claims to have visited the island and whose descriptions Procopius uses in presenting this part of the world.²⁵ Procopius is in fact far less sceptical regarding the existence of Thule, as the following passage shows:

ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν ἐς ταύτην ἰέναι τὴν νῆσον τῶν τε εἰρημένων αὐτόπτη γενέσθαι, καίπερ γλιχομένῳ, τρόπῳ οὐδενὶ ξυνηγέχθη. τῶν μέντοι ἐς ἡμᾶς ἐνθένδε ἀφικομένων ἐπυνθανόμην ὅπη ποτὲ οἱοί τέ εἰσι τῶν ἡμερῶν λογίζεσθαι τὸ μέτρον οὔτε ἀνίσχοντος οὔτε δύνοντος τοῖς καθήκουσι χρόνοις ἐνταῦθα ἡλίου. οἷπερ ἐμοὶ λόγον ἀληθῆ τε καὶ πιστὸν ἔφρασαν.

(And although I was eager to go to this island and become an eyewitness of the things I have told, no opportunity ever presented itself. However, I made enquiry from those who come to us from the island as to how in the world they are able to reckon the length of the days, since the sun never rises nor sets there at the appointed times. And they gave me an account which is true and trustworthy.)²⁶

²¹ For detailed discussion see: Whitaker, 'The Problem of Pytheas' Thule'.

²² Pomponius Mela, *Description of the World*, III.57, trans. by Romer.

²³ Pliny, *Naturalis Historiae* IV.16.104.

²⁴ However, we may doubt this claim due to the fact that his account was questioned even in antiquity.

²⁵ Procopius equated Thule with Norway. For more details on possible locations of Thule, see Cassidy, 'The Voyage of an Island'.

²⁶ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, VI.15.8, ed. and trans. by Dewing.

Another writer of late antiquity, Jordanes, speaks about the North. He introduces an additional northern point in our story. In Jordanes's telling: 'Habet quoque is ipse inmensus pelagus in parte arctoa, id est septentrionali, amplam insulam nomine Scandzam' (The same mighty sea has also in its arctic region that is in the north a great island named Scandza).²⁷ And explaining it later in more details he adds:

Ad Scandziae insulae situm, quod superius reliquimus, redeamus. De hac etenim in secundo sui operis libro Claudius Ptolomeus, orbis terrae discriptor egregius, meminit dicens: est in Oceani arctoi salo posita insula magna, nomine Scandza, in modum folii cetri, lateribus pandis, per longum ducta concludens se. De qua et Pomponius Mela in maris sinu Codano positam refert, cuius ripas influit Oceanus. Haec a fronte posita est Vistulae fluminis, qui Sarmaticis montibus ortis in conspectus Scandzae septentrionali Oceano trisulcus inlabitur, Germaniam Scythiamque determinans. Haec ergo habet ab oriente vastissimum lacum in orbis terrae gremio, unde Vagi fluvius velut quodam ventrae generatus in Oceanum undosus evolvitur. Ab occidente namque immenso pelago circumdatur, a septentrione quoque innavigabili eodem vastissimo concluditur Oceano, ex quo quasi quodam brachio exiente, sinu distento, Germanicum mare efficitur.

(Let us now return to the site of the island of Scandza, which we left above. Claudius Ptolemaeus, an excellent describer of the world, has made mention of it in the second book of his work, saying: 'There is a great island situated in the surge of the northern Ocean, Scandza by name, in the shape of a juniper leaf with bulging sides that taper down to a point at a long end.' Pomponius Mela also makes mention of it as situated in the Codan Gulf of the sea, with Ocean lapping its shores. This island lies in front of the river Vistula, which rises in the Sarmatian mountains and flows through its triple mouth into the northern Ocean in sight of Scandza, separating Germany and Scythia. The island has in its eastern part a vast lake in the bosom of the earth, whence the Vagus river springs from the bowels of the earth and flows surging into the Ocean. And on the west it is surrounded by an immense sea. On the north it is bounded by the same vast unnavigable Ocean, from which by means of a sort of projecting arm of land a bay is cut off and forms the German Sea.)²⁸

A variation of Scandza, Scatinavia,²⁹ was mentioned for the first time in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, where it denoted the most famous of the islands tucked in the Codanian Gulf beyond the Saevo Mountains. The mysterious

²⁷ Jordanus, *The Gothic History*, I.9. Translations of Jordanes are from *The Gothic History of Jordanes*, trans. by Mierow.

²⁸ Jordanus, *The Gothic History*, III.16.

²⁹ Etymology of term in Helle, *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, p. 1.

island was of unknown size and considered to be ‘alter terrarum orbis’ (a second world) by the indigenous population.³⁰ Mela also speaks of an island, Codanonia or Candanovia, as the biggest and the most fertile of all in that gulf.³¹ The difference between these reports lies in the amount of detail that respective writers had: for Pliny and Mela, Scandinavia is only some island, the existence of which was known; but for Jordanes, the idea of Scandinavia is fully formed, rich with details and concrete data.

Understanding the spatially specific elements of the concept of North is threefold. First, as a point of extreme North, Oceanus and the Arctic Circle are named as denoting the ultimate ends of both the known and the inhabited world. This space is subjected to a number of fantastic imaginings as a place where stars are neither born nor die, and where unidentified matter creates the ocean.³² These accounts belong almost in entirety to the sphere of mythological speculation. Second, a new layer is added with the specific description of Thule as an island that physically exists in the north. The third element appears with a place called Scandinavia north of the inhabited Greco-Roman world. This layer illustrates accounts that are more solid, since this region was positioned in relative proximity to Roman borders. Late antique accounts of Scandinavia are abundant with physical descriptions of space, flora and fauna, and, as we will discuss next, autochthonic tribes. The common feature that emerges from these reports is that the North usually designates a border — a border with the inhabited, known world at the extreme limits of Earth, and, in the case of the Arctic Circle and some accounts of Thule, a place that is inconceivable and impossible to pin on the map, since it is not of this world.

³⁰ Pliny, *Naturalis Historiae* IV.13.96.

³¹ This variation is from Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*, s.v. *Scandia*. Romer, following the manuscript, refers to it as *Scadinavia*.

³² ‘ὅλην μὲν τὴν Βρεττανικὴν ἐμβαδὸν ἐπελθεῖν φάσκοντος, τὴν δὲ περίμετρον πλείονων ἢ τεττάρων μυριάδων ἀποδόντος τῆς νήσου, προσιστορήσαντος δὲ καὶ τὰ περὶ τῆς Θούλης καὶ τῶν τόπων ἐκείνων, ἐν οἷς οὔτε γῆ καθ’ αὐτὴν ὑπῆρχεν ἔτι οὔτε θάλαττα οὔτ’ ἀήρ, ἀλλὰ σύγκριμά τι ἐκ τούτων πλεῦμονι θαλαττίῳ ἑοικός, ἐν ᾧ φησι τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλατταν αἰωρεῖσθαι καὶ τὰ σύμπαντα’ (For after asserting that he travelled all over the whole of Britain that was accessible Pythias reported that the coastline of the island was more than forty thousand stadia, and added his story about Thule and about those regions in which there was no longer either land properly so-called, or sea, or air, but a kind of substance concreted from all these elements, resembling sea-lungs — a thing in which, he says, the earth, the sea, and all the elements are held in suspension); Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, II .4.1.

The Inhabitants of North

The population inhabiting mythical or actual areas is an integral part of all tales about North. Whether these stories treat incredible creatures or historical tribes occupying northernmost lands, they present useful tools for unveiling and understanding what North represented for respective authors and for discovering underlying rationales. For the sake of clarity, this discussion will be divided into three segments: occupants of Thule, the Hyperboreans, and historical tribes.

Homer knew about nameless people inhabiting the farthest North, says Strabo, and he was also informed about their way of life.³³ Strabo presents little data to support this claim, simply describing the northernmost folk as cattle-raising wanderers. What remains unclear is whether Strabo locates these nomads on Thule or in Ireland, since he has previously stated that Ierne (Ireland) was the northernmost inhabited point. A far more detailed account on the population dwelling on Thule, their customs, and their general *modus vivendi* comes from Procopius. From his report, we learn that there were thirteen nations living on Thule, and each nation had its own king; the most numerous are Gauti, and the most characteristic are Scritiphini, who are said to be like beasts in their ways because they walk around dressed only in animal skins, do not till the fields, and whose women are said to accompany men in the hunt.³⁴ He reports on the religious practices of Thule:

Οἱ μέντοι ἄλλοι Θουλίται ὡς εἰπεῖν ἅπαντες οὐδέν τι μέγα διαλλάσσουσι τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων, θεοὺς μέντοι καὶ δαίμονας πολλοὺς σέβουσιν, οὐρανίους τε καὶ ἀερίους, ἐγγεῖους τε καὶ θαλασσίους, καὶ ἄλλα ἅττα δαιμόνια ἐν ὕδασι πηγῶν τε καὶ ποταμῶν εἶναι λεγόμενα. θύουσι δὲ ἐνδελεχέστατα ἱερεῖα πάντα καὶ ἐναγίζουσι, τῶν δὲ ἱερείων σφίσι τὸ κάλλιστον ἀνθρωπὸς ἐστὶν ὅνπερ δορυάλωτον ποιήσαιντο πρῶτον: τοῦτον γὰρ τῷ Ἄρει θύουσιν, ἐπεὶ θεὸν αὐτὸν νομίζουσι μέγιστον εἶναι. ἱερεῦνται δὲ τὸν αἰχμάλωτον οὐ θύοντες μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπὸ ξύλου κρεμώντες, καὶ ἐς τὰς ἀκάνθας ῥιπτοῦντες, ταῖς ἄλλαις τε κτείνοντες θανάτου ἰδέαις οἰκτίσταις. οὕτω μὲν Θουλίται βιοῦσιν.

(But all the other inhabitants of Thule, practically speaking, do not differ very much from the rest of men, but they revere in great numbers gods and demons both of the heavens and of the air, of the earth and of the sea, and sundry other demons which are said to be in the waters of springs and rivers. And they incessantly offer up all kinds of sacrifices, and make oblations to the dead, but the noblest of sacri-

³³ Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, I.1.6.

³⁴ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, VI.15.16–21, ed. and trans. by Dewing.

fices, in their eyes, is the first human being whom they have taken captive in war; for they sacrifice him to Ares, whom they regard as the greatest god. And the manner in which they offer up the captive is not by sacrificing him on an altar only, but also by hanging him from a tree, or throwing them among thorns, or killing him by some of the other most cruel forms of death. Thus, then, do the inhabitants of Thule live.)³⁵

The brevity of Strabo's account of Thule (if we accept that his rendering of Homer's tradition of an ultimate northern land speaks of Thule) makes it difficult to construct a valid comparison with Procopius's far more elaborate story. Strabo states that the peoples of Thule are yet unnamed, in contrast with Procopius who explicitly names two tribes. However, the doubtful credibility of those few details that Procopius provides — for example, stating that Scythiphini mothers do not give milk to their newborns but instead hang them in trees wrapped in animal skin, feed them with animal marrow, and immediately leave for hunting³⁶ — actually makes Strabo's scanty account far more plausible in terms of accountability.

The ancient writers made much more of Hyperborea, a utopian land that has not ceased to attract attention since the Renaissance. Although there is significant scholarship on Hyperborea, by means of this rereading I hope to provide a fresh perspective and contribute to a long tradition of research.³⁷ The image of the land beyond the North Wind, and more precisely its inhabitants, frames the concept of North.

Tales about Hyperboreans which Diodorus Siculus and Pomponius Mela pass on to us arise out of folklore. Diodorus's account, which he himself characterizes as legendary (τὰ μυθολογούμενα),³⁸ speaks of a fertile island situated in the North, beyond the land of the Gauls, and inhabited by benevolent men, who believe in and venerate the Greek gods (Apollo and Leto). Ruled by Boreas's descendants, these people devote the majority of their time to playing cithara and dancing. The greater part of Diodorus's descriptions relate to religious aspects of the Hyperboreans and their connection with the Greek world.

³⁵ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, vi.15.21–26, ed. and trans. by Dewing.

³⁶ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, vi.15.22, ed. and trans. by Dewing.

³⁷ As a good starting point see Ziegler and Sontheimer, *Der Kleine Pauly*, s.v. *Hyperboreioi*; on the etymology of term, see Macurdy, 'The Hyperboreans'; for Greco-Celtic contexts, see Bridgman, *Hyperboreans*; an excellent study supporting the hypothesis that Hyperborea served as a designation for Far North is Allinson, 'Apollo Borealis'. See also Sandin's chapter in this volume.

³⁸ Diodorus, *Library of History*, ii.47.

Mela, however, places the Hyperboreans in the extreme north, beyond the point where the North Wind blows. Based on his account of six months of continual light or dark, it can be safely presumed that he believed that Hyperborea was placed in the Arctic:

In Asiatico litore primi Hyperborei super aquilonem Rhiphaeosque montes sub ipso siderum cardine iscent; ubi sol non cotidie ut nobis sed primum verno sequinoctio exortus autumnali demum occidit; ideo sex mensibus dies et totidem aliis nox usque continua est.

(On the Asiatic littoral, first of all, the Hyperboreans are located behind the north wind, above the Rhiphaean Mountains, and very pole of the stars, where the sun rises, not every day as it does for us, but for the first time at the vernal equinox, and where it eventually sets the autumnal equinox. Therefore, for six months daylight is completely uninterrupted, and for the next six months night is completely uninterrupted.)³⁹

He attributed righteousness, non-belligerence, and an overall *joie du vivre* to Hyperboreans. Concluding his account, he adds:

Habitant lucos silvasque, et ubi eos vivendi satietas magis quam taedium cepit, hilares redimiti sertis semet ipsi in pelagus ex certa rupe praecipites dant. Id eis funus exinium est.

(The Hyperboreans inhabit groves and forests, and when a sense of having been satisfied by life (rather than boredom) has gripped them, they cheerfully wreath themselves in flowers and actually throw themselves into the sea from particular cliff. For them that is the finest death ritual.)⁴⁰

While writing around the same time (the middle of the first century BCE and the first century CE, respectively), Diodorus and Mela differ in tone. Diodorus, as previously stated, places his account in the sphere of legends, and therefore he is concerned mostly with divine aspects of Hyperboreans, while Mela includes both celestial phenomena and information on their characters and customs.

It appears that two contradictory mechanisms lie behind these reports: on the one hand, an evident need to connect Hyperboreans, or shall we say *Northerners*, with the Greek and Roman world by introducing a veneration

³⁹ Pomponius Mela, *De chorographia libri tres*, III.36, ed. by Frick. English translation by Romer.

⁴⁰ Pomponius Mela; *De chorographia libri tres*, III.38, ed. by Frick. English translation by Romer.

of familiar gods; and simultaneously, on the other hand, an impulse to set a *boundary* by describing a distant, utopian land, the inhabitants of which lead fulfilled, careless, and happy bestial lives in a way incomprehensible and terrifying to ancient Greeks and Romans. The Hyperboreans also seemed to stand for the border of the known world as a population, a transitional stadium between men and gods, existing only in the mysterious and far northern lands. The geographically shifting spatial concept of North (Thule, Hyperborea, mystical islands in the faraway north Ocean) was now enriched by equally contradictory reports on population dwelling in these regions. It seems like the authors wanted to connect and disconnect with the North at the same time. They attempted to connect through the mother of Apollo, Leto, who is said to be born in North (Hyperborea)⁴¹ and, through the portrayal of northerners as worshippers of their god, Apollo, present them as being friendly towards the Greeks. At the same time, they distance themselves from the Northerners by displaying the unknown and bringing fear in tales concerning incomprehensible and gruesome customs. Accounts of mythical Northerners introduce an element of dichotomy into the concept of the North, illustrating at the same time what ancients thought of themselves and of others. In the concept of North, we can find the ever-present need in the ancient world to encounter the unknown, understand it, and subsequently familiarize it, while setting firm boundaries between the civilized and uncivilized manner of conduct.⁴²

The character of historians' reports on the third layer of our concept of North — modern-day Scandinavia — is primarily conditioned by the tendencies and purposes of writing, as well as the data that the writers had. The time span between Pliny, writing in the first century CE, and Jordanes, in the sixth century CE, is important because we can easily observe whether and how the quantity of available information about tribes inhabiting ancient Scandinavia influenced how they were reported in the Greco-Roman world. From Pliny's report arose the first mention of the term 'Scandinavia,' and Jordanes's account

⁴¹ 'μυθολογοῦσι δ' ἐν αὐτῇ τὴν Λητῶ γεγονέναι: διὸ καὶ τὸν Ἀπόλλω μάλιστα τῶν ἄλλων θεῶν παρ' αὐτοῖς τιμᾶσθαι: εἶναι δ' αὐτοὺς ὥσπερ ἱερεῖς τινὰς Ἀπόλλωνος διὰ τὸ τὸν θεὸν τοῦτον καθ' ἡμέραν ὑπ' αὐτῶν ὑμνεῖσθαι μετ' ὥδῃς συνεχῶς καὶ τιμᾶσθαι διαφερόντως' (Moreover, the following legend is told concerning it: Leto was born on this island, and for that reason Apollo is honoured among them above all other gods; and the inhabitants are looked upon as priests of Apollo, after a manner, since daily they praise this god continuously in song and honour him exceedingly); Diodorus, *Library of History* 11.47.2, trans. by Oldfather.

⁴² Civilized is to be understood as following certain set of rules innate to Greco-Roman world.

is considered to be the earliest realistic description of tribes inhabiting the peninsula. Pliny mentions Hilleviones and their five hundred villages⁴³ and acknowledges that they are located in only one part of an island, whose magnitude is otherwise unknown. If we consider the fact that at the time when Pliny wrote *Natural History*, the northern border of the Roman Empire reached as far as modern-day France, the scantiness of his data is not surprising. He probably gathered his data from Roman generals and soldiers, who again collected them via lore and oral transmission. An idea that Scandza (Scandinavia) is an island persevered until the age of Jordanes. However, his knowledge of the nations who dwelt there surpasses, as he says, that of Ptolameus, who named only seven of them in comparison with the twenty-eight of Jordanes. Jordanes presents a colourful image of the island's population: the Adogit live in the Far North, at the same time blessed and cursed with forty days of light in summer and dark in winter; Screrefennae live on a diet based solely on flesh and birds' eggs and live in swamps; Suehans and Thuringians breed splendid horses; and the most gentle and mild of all are the Finns.⁴⁴ Ending his report he says: 'Hae

⁴³ Pliny, *Naturalis Historiae*, IV.27.

⁴⁴ 'Sequitur deinde diversarum turba nationum, Theustes, Vagoth, Bergio, Hallin, Liothida, quorum omnium sedes sub uno plani ac fertilis, et propterea inibi aliarum gentium incursionibus infestantur. Post hos Ahelmlil, Finnaithae, Fervir, Ganthigoth, acre hominum genus et at bella prumtissimum. Dehinc Mixi, Evagre, Otingis. Hi omnes excisis rupibus quasi castellis inhabitant ritu beluino. Sunt et his exteriores Ostrogothae, Raumarici, Aeragnaricii, Finni mitissimi, Scandzae cultoribus omnibus mitiores; nec non et pares eorum Vinovilothe; Suetidi, cogniti in hac gente reliquis corpore eminentiores: quamvis et Dani, ex ipsorum stirpe progressi, Herulos propriis sedibus expulerunt, qui inter omnes Scandiae nationes nomen sibi ob nimia proceritate affectant praecipuum. Sunt quamquam et horum positura Grannii, Augandzi, Eunixi, Taetel, Rugi, Arochi, Ranii, quibus non ante multos annos Roduulf rex fuit' (Here also are those who send through innumerable other tribes the sappherine skins to trade for Roman use. They are a people famed for the dark beauty of their furs and, though living in poverty, are most richly clothed. Then comes a throng of various nations, Theustes, Vagoth, Bergio, Hallin, Liothida. All their habitations are in one level and fertile region. Wherefore they are disturbed there by the attacks of other tribes. Behind these are the Ahelmlil, Finnaithae, Fervir and Ganthigoth, a race of men bold and quick to fight. Then come the Mixi, Evagre, and Otingis. All these live like wild animals in rocks hewn out like castles. And there are beyond these the Ostrogoths, Raumarici, Aeragnaricii, and the most gentle Finns, milder than all the inhabitants of Scandza. Like them are the Vinovilith also. The Suetidi are of this stock and excel the rest in stature. However, the Dani, who trace their origin to the same stock, drove from their homes the Heruli, who lay claim to preëminence among all the nations of Scandza for their tallness. Furthermore there are in the same neighborhood the Grannii, Augandzi, Eunixi, Taetel, Rugi, Arochi, and Ranii, over whom Roduulf was king not many years ago); Jordanes, *The Gothic History*, III.19, trans. by Mierow.

itaque gentes, Germanis corpore et animo grandiores, pugnabant beluina saevitia' (All these nations surpassed the Germans in size and spirit, and fought with the cruelty of wild Beasts).⁴⁵

An interesting parallel can be drawn between Jordanes's report on Scandza and Procopius's on Thule. They both mention a similarly named tribe (Screrefennae/Scrithiphini) and celestial phenomena such as the equinox. The precise location of the island was troublesome for them, but the similarity of data and the general idea of the distant and northernmost position of these nations attracts attention.

In thinking about these ancient descriptions of inhabitants of the North, certain points need to be emphasized. First, when it comes to the mythical descriptions we need to bear in mind that the ancient world was essentially characterized by its need for finding explanations for the things that were odd and unfamiliar. This need in certain cases naturally grew into the creation of stories filled with mythical elements, important evidence of attitudes that Greek and Roman authors held towards specific subjects. Therefore, the legendary inhabitants of the North represent in most cases attitudes that were held towards barbarians in general. However, certain specifics caused by the nature of the landscape, climate differences, and celestial phenomena in the North created a dark atmosphere, reflecting a fear on the part of those who retold and added to stories about, and helped to reinvent, this scary and at the same time astonishing other world. Second, the form of the historical accounts depends heavily on the goals held by individual authors in writing and describing northern regions. For example, the importance of having reliable knowledge about tribes who posed a danger to the Roman Empire and its borders, and the importance of investigating causes of certain historical events, may introduce contradictory elements of exaggeration and diminish their relevance. Pliny, from his position, was interested primarily in natural landscape, and he included population as a part of this. Jordanes, transmitting Ptolomeus's account, held a broader perspective that included searching for answers that might explain the fall of Rome. In this way, North can be assumed to represent one of the symbols of doom: the unknown world which brought disaster down upon the Roman Empire by opening it to barbarians. Finally, however, whether embedded in the text or stated openly, the concept of North stays open for interpretation, even after the Greco-Roman world ceased to exist.

⁴⁵ Jordanes, *The Gothic History*, III.19, trans. by Mierow.

Between Dark and Light

Certain authors include reports on weather and natural phenomena in the North. Procopius and Jordanes describe the circumstances in which they occur and climatic effects on autochthone population. Their accounts reflect astonishing creativity in attempts to comprehend the causes, nature, and consequences of these phenomena. Thus Jordanes, speaking about polar days and nights, says:

In cuius parte arctoa gens Adogit consistit, quae fertur in aestate media quadraginta diebus et noctibus luces habere continuas, itemque brumali tempore eodem dierum noctiumque numero luce clara nescire. Ita alternato merore cum gaudio beneficio aliis damnoque impar est. Et hoc quare? Quia prolixioribus diebus solem ad orientem per axis marginem vident redeuntem brevioribus vero non sic conspiciuntur apud illos, sed aliter, quia austrinis signis percurrit, et quod nobis videtur sol ab imo surgere, illos per terrae marginem dicitur circuire.

(In the northern part of the island the race of the Adogit live, who are said to have continual light in midsummer for forty days and nights, and who likewise have no clear light in the winter season for the same number of days and nights. By reason of this alternation of sorrow and joy they are like no other race in their sufferings and blessings. And why? Because during the longer days they see the sun returning to the east along the rim of the horizon, but on the shorter days it is not thus seen. The sun shows itself differently because it is passing through the southern signs, and whereas to us the sun seem to rise from below, it seems to go around them along the edge of the earth.)⁴⁶

For Jordanes, the oddities of the Northerners were linked to specifics in climate and celestial phenomena. These phenomena were beyond comparison to anything known and thus beyond the scope of full comprehension. In the ancient Greco-Roman world, celestial phenomena were closely scrutinized and in some cases considered to be warnings of impending catastrophes. Thus in Jordanes's view, people who were forced to live with regular such occurrences must have had characters who were so different that they escaped understanding. The vagueness of Jordanes's description of the effect that the northern summers and winters had on indigenous tribes can be understood as intentional. He wanted to create a broader picture in which the image of North was purposefully left unfinished.

⁴⁶ Jordannes, *The Gothic History*, III.19.20, trans. by Mierow.

Procopius speaks more concretely of the sad and devastating effects that the lack of sunlight has on Northerners and introduces new detail when speaking of the peculiarities of polar summers and winters:

ἐνταῦθα γίνεται τι ἀνὰ πᾶν ἔτος θαυμάσιον οἶον. ὁ γὰρ ἥλιος ἀμφὶ θερινὰς μὲν τροπὰς μάλιστα ἐς ἡμέρας τεσσαράκοντα οὐδαμῇ δύει, ἀλλὰ διηγεκῶς πάντα τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον ὑπὲρ γῆς φαίνεται. μηνὶ δὲ οὐχ ἥσσον ἢ ἕξ ὕστερον ἀμφὶ τὰς χειμερινὰς που τροπὰς ἥλιος μὲν ἐς ἡμέρας τεσσαράκοντα τῆς νήσου ταύτης οὐδαμῇ φαίνεται, νύξ δὲ αὐτῆς ἀπέραντος κατακέχυται· κατῆφεία τε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἔχει πάντα τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον τοὺς τῆδε ἀνθρώπους, ἐπεὶ ἀλλήλοις ἐπιμίγνυσθαι μεταξὺ οὐδεμιᾶ μηχανῇ ἔχουσιν.

(In that place a very wonderful thing takes place each year. For the sun at the time of the summer solstice never sets for forty days, but appears constantly during this whole time above the earth. But not less than six months later, at about the time of the winter solstice, the sun is never seen on this island for forty days, but never-ending night envelops it; and as a result of this dejection holds the people there during this whole time, because they are unable by any means to mingle with one another during this interval.)⁴⁷

His account is far more specific and definite in comparison with that of Jordanes. Procopius further describes the festival that was organized near to the end of winter after the men were sent into the mountains to check for the signs of the coming sun, and he rationalizes their behaviour as being based on fear.⁴⁸ The perceived impact of the polar days and nights on Northerners can be interpreted as symbols of otherness that were attributed to the North in general. Unfamiliarity with celestial phenomena occurring regularly in extreme northern areas contributed to an overall sense of amazement and fear that pervades all the reports that we have. Because the phenomena were unfamiliar, intentional incompleteness and openness for subsequent build up fitted perfectly into the nature of the concept of the North.

Between Maps and Myths

At the end of this journey through ancient perceptions of the North, unexpected conclusions can be drawn: Hyperborea, Thule, Scandza, and the north Ocean all stand for a single, general, and layered idea of North. All of these representations have in common a prevailing element of incompleteness, a suscep-

⁴⁷ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, vi.15.6–7, ed. and trans. by Dewing.

⁴⁸ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, vi.15.13–14, ed. and trans. by Dewing.

tibility for change and interpretation. North is the embodiment of dichotomy, being simultaneously both boundary and bridge to the Greco-Roman world. If we compare Diodorus's account, which places the beginnings of the Greek world in the North by linking Apollo's mother to Hyperborea, and Jordanes's account, in which the North brought about the end of the classical world, another contradictory element can be observed: the North appears as a constant at the very beginning and the very end of classical world. The North was a physical space that could be conceptualized as belonging on a map, but where exactly to place it and what contents might fill it remained open questions. Finally, it would seem, we must conclude that the idea of North in antiquity stood somewhere between maps and myths.

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THE MAKING OF NORMANDY AS A *NORTHMEN* LAND: MYTHOLOGICAL CULTIVATION AND COASTAL WAY-FINDING

Barbara Auger

Born from the ashes of the Viking raids on Neustria, Normandy was shaped during the tenth century by settlements of various groups of people from Denmark, Norway, and the British Isles. Located within the Frankish kingdom and administrated by the descendants of the Nordic settlers alongside Christian elites, Normandy grew as a mesh of influences assimilated into the indigenous culture. Little material evidence of its Scandinavian essence has been found, yet the name of the land still carries a reference to the North. As poet Wace (1100–74) writes in his *Roman de Rou*:

Cest air, cest ciel, u terre u mer,
Tuit solent gent, North apeler,
Por North un vent ki sort è vient
De là ù li ciel li char tient.
[...]
Man en engleis et en norreis
hume signifie en franceis;
justez ensemble north e man
e ensemble dites Northman;
ceo est hume de north en rumans,
de ceo vint li nuns as Normanz.
Normant soelent estre apelé
cil ki la dunt north vient sunt né.

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(Whatever there is towards the north, which we call the Chariot in the Sky [the Great Bear], whether it is sky or air, land or sea, everyone is accustomed to call north, because from the north there comes and rises a wind from where the sky holds its chariot. [...] In English and Norse 'man' is equivalent to 'homme' [*hume*] in French. Bring together 'north' and 'man' and together you say Northman, that is 'man of the north' in the vernacular, and from this came the name Normans. Those who were born where the north wind comes from are habitually called Normans.)¹

This etymology — which first appeared in the work of William of Apulia² and is also found in the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* as revised by Robert of Torigni (1106–1186)³ — is part of a larger foundation narrative started by Dudo of Saint-Quentin (*De moribus et actis primorum Normannorum ducum*, written between 996 and 1015)⁴ at the request of Duke Richard I (c. 930–96). Dudo's *De moribus* was later revised by William of Jumièges (*Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, written between 1050 and 1070) whose text was then reworked by Orderic Vitalis (1075–c. 1142) and Robert of Torigni; each one of them continuing the timeline to forge what is now known as the Norman 'myth'.⁵

Referring to theorist Marc Augé, literature professor Robert Rix points out that the 'foundation narratives, which locate a place of origin, were necessary for those attenuated by migration or coming about through a merger with new pop-

¹ Wace, *Roman de Rou*, trans. by Burgess, p. 91.

² Writing in the 1090s, William of Apulia chronicles the deeds of the Normans in southern Italy. He is, according to Elisabeth van Houts (*Gesta*, I, 16, note), the first to mention this etymology: 'Hos quando ventus, quem lingua soli genialis | Nort vocat, advexit boreas regionis ad oras, | A qua digressi fines petiere Latinos, | Et man est apud hos, homo quad perhibetur apud nos; | Normanni dicuntur, id est homines boreales' (In the language of their native country the wind which carries them from the boreal regions from which they have departed to seek the frontiers of Italy is called *north*, and the word *man* is used among them to signify *homo*; thus they are called *Normans*, that is men of the North Wind [*homines boreales*]). Translation from Guillaume de Pouille, *La Geste de Robert Guiscard*, trans. by Mathieu.

³ William of Jumièges and others, *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, ed. by van Houts, 1.1(4): 'Nortmanni autem dicuntur, qui lingua eorum Boreas North vocatur, homo vero man; inde Northmanni, id est homines boreales per denominationem nuncupantur' (They are also named Northman [*Nortmanni*], because in their language the North Wind [*Boreas*] is called *North* and *Mann* means man; therefore this denomination of Nortmanni means men of the North). The source is hereafter cited as *Gesta*.

⁴ Dudo of St Quentin, *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum*, ed. by Lair. For an English translation, see *History of the Normans*, trans. by Christiansen or the online freely accessible version by Felice Lifshitz.

⁵ Albu, *The Normans in their Histories*.

ulations'.⁶ Norman history is indeed shaped with identity intention. Throughout their accounts, Dudo and his continuators use multiple ancient references, such as Jordanes, Virgil, and the Bible, in order to locate that place of origin and establish the identity of these men of the North settled among the Franks.

This chapter will examine the foundation narratives in order to determine the anthropological structures that lie within. How did the medieval writers construct the myth of the *Northmen*? Beyond portraiture of who the settlers were, what can we learn about the vision of the settlers? To answer these questions, first I will map out the North origin myth-making of early Norman historians. Then, I turn to the sea as a mode of locating the North in Normandy.

Normandy as an Empty Periphery: et in solitudinem redegit

Located between the sea and the Frankish kingdom, Normandy is crossed by the river Seine which was, during the pre-settlement period, an open artery inhabited by powerful monastic centres with prolific scriptoria: the Benedictine abbeys of St Ouen in Rouen founded in 553; St Wandrille founded in 648; Jumièges founded in 654; and Fécamp founded in 658. According to monastic annals and chronicles, the first Viking raids on Normandy (then called Neustria) occurred in the last decade of the eighth century. But only after 845 did the Norsemen begin to return each spring, pillaging abbeys on a regular basis. In 851, they settled for their first winter by the river Seine, attacking and burning down the Fécamp, St Wandrille, and Jumièges monasteries; they had previously destroyed St Ouen in 841.

From a Christian viewpoint, the Viking raids resulted in a *tabula rasa*: monasteries and written sources were lost, causing a major interruption in their historical narrative. For instance, the annals of St Wandrille break off in 855 when a Viking band spent a year by the Seine, while the annals of Saint-Vaast (in Picardy, northern France) continue until the year 900. This means that in the eleventh century, when he started his *De moribus* timeline, cleric Dudo found a breach in the written records that were usually kept in detail by the Christian monks for centuries. As the Word⁷ was the foundation of the Christian religion and the church the vessel of God,⁸ more than buildings and books were

⁶ Rix, *The Barbarian North in Medieval Imagination*, p. 15.

⁷ Gospel of John 1. 1: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.'

⁸ Auger, 'Les Figures de proue zoomorphes'.

lost—the continuation of the eternal link to God was lost. One of the historian's duties was to fill the void in recorded history, crafting the Norman identity within the revised written text of this godly historicity.

The theme of devastation of this marginal part of the Frankish territory by a century of Viking incursions appears in the sources. For example, in the *Gesta* of William of Jumièges, Viking Hasting asks Viking Rollo: 'Have you ever heard of a certain Hasting, who arrived here as an exile from your lands with a vast number of ships and who more or less devastated this realm of the Franks and reduced it to a desert?'⁹ In Dudo's *De moribus*, the desert is used to describe the Frankish kingdom before the 911 treaty occurs.¹⁰

From the view-point of Christian monastic tradition, this imagery makes sense. The desert is seen as an in-between land, which was close yet separated from the civilized world. In this peripheral land, Christians fight their own demons and expel them in order to find God. If the desert was once the birthplace of the monastic tradition, it could also be its place of rebirth. By comparing pre-settlement Normandy to a desert, the medieval historians overlaid a spiritual quest upon their narratives, thus synchronizing their political,¹¹ educational,¹² and religious writing with a geographical perception of Normandy being emptied of its spiritual centres.

The Legends of Origin and the Christian Space-Time Perception

The desert is the birthplace of Normandy but not its point of origin. Each medieval Norman historian proposed his own starting point. Dudo begins his timeline with geographical and ethnographical considerations borrowed from Jordanes (sixth century).¹³ William of Jumièges refers to Noah's grandson,¹⁴ while Orderic Vitalis begins his *Historia ecclesiastica* with the Nativity. They all seek to align Normandy's foundation with a Christian chronology.

⁹ *Gesta* 2.4(10): 'et in solitudinem redegit' (and reduced it to a desert).

¹⁰ Dudo, *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum*, ed. by Lair, p. 136: 'quasi solitudo Francia deserta haberetur'.

¹¹ Davis, *The Normans and their Myth*.

¹² Gelting, 'The Courtly Viking'.

¹³ See Donecker's essay in this volume on how Jordanes influenced the vision of migration.

¹⁴ *Gesta* 1.2(3), following *Getica* 9, 25–41, 47–55 according to Albu, *The Normans in their Histories*, p. 62.

By referring to Jordanes, Dudo is the first to adapt what Robert Rix calls the 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend to the Norman context.¹⁵ In his *Getica*, Jordanes describes the migration process of the Goths from their legendary Northern homeland ('a great island named Scandza') towards Italy, via Dacia in south-east Europe through a land located north of the Black Sea. Following Jordanes's narrative structure, Dudo depicts the Normans as 'ferae gentes et barbarae, quae ex Canza insula Oceano hinc inde circumsepta, velut examen apum ex canistro, seu gladius e vagina, diversitate multimoda dicuntur prosiluisse consuetudine barbarica' (a savage and barbarian people, which are said to have come in different ways from the island of Scanza, surrounded by the Ocean, like a swarm of bees from a hive, or like a sword (*gladius*) from the scabbard (*vagina*), as it is said barbarians leap forward).¹⁶ The Normans are identified with the Goths of Jordanes, coming from the leaf-shaped island of Scandza. In order to explain their migration process, Dudo also refers to Dacia as one of their settlements, merging the terms *Daci* (Dacian [people]) with the term *Dani* (Dane).¹⁷ Similarly, even if he roots his narrative in the biblical timeline, William of Jumièges still uses the same pattern: Normans leave the island of Scanza and sail out to a new home, subsequently travelling deep into the German territories and settling in Dacia.¹⁸

This narrative fashion applied by Dudo to the Normans is a retrospective reconstruction based on his knowledge of the written tradition. This type of retelling of the past had been produced since ancient times.¹⁹ Robert Rix notes that 'much of the specific information given about Scandza relies on geographical learning and perception found in texts from Antiquity. [...] One clear indica-

¹⁵ Rix, *The Barbarian North in Medieval Imagination*, p. 66; see also chap. 2, p. 29.

¹⁶ Cited by Rix, *The Barbarian North in Medieval Imagination*, p. 37; Dudo, *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum*, ed. by Lair, p. 129

¹⁷ Before Dudo, during the eighth century the terminology used to refer to the Northmen is *Dani* for the Danes, and the general term of *Nortmanni* or *Normanni* to name the Scandinavian people. The countries inhabited by the Norsemen are then called *Nortmanni*, as one territory. During the tenth century, another term is also used: *Marcomanni* (name of a Bohemian Germanic people).

¹⁸ Rix, *The Barbarian North in Medieval Imagination*, p. 67: 'Upon a migration from Scanza, he introduces a settlement in Dacia, or Danamarca. This stopover in Denmark was necessary to make the tale fit factual history, which links Norman dukes to the Danes.' See: *Gesta* 1.3(4).

¹⁹ Jacob, 'L'Ordre généalogique'.

tion of this is the reference to Thule.²⁰ For instance, Pindar in his third *Olympian ode* believes the Hyperboreans (people from 'beyond the North Wind') lived near the sources of Danube, located in mythical mountains.²¹ The Normans, the Goths, and the Hyperboreans are all based on a similar genealogical order rooted in the myth of the Barbarian from the North. From the Greek mythographers to the medieval historians, each retelling used the same historical pattern which was only adjusted slightly to match local contexts. From Thule to Scandza, from Dacia to Normandy, the origin of the barbarians is transcribed in geographical contexts in order to establish and integrate these migrating people.

However, Dudo's narrative must be differentiated from those of Jordanes or Pindar. According to Katô Shûichi, the Christian mind perceives time as a segment, while the classical Greek perception of time is based on a cycle, in which one particular event would be repeated infinitely.²² In the Bible, all episodes prefigure the Salvation promise; and the Old Testament is a mirror of the New Testament (the great Flood prefiguring the Apocalypse, etc.). In his study of the perception of time in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Michael Walzer writes: 'In Exodus history events occur only once, and they take their significance from a system of backward- and forward-looking interconnections.'²³ Each event is meaningful in regard to the global structure. For instance, in Dudo's text, pagan Rollo has a vision of an event which will be accomplished by his Christian grandson Duke Richard I (for whom Dudo wrote his account).²⁴ The prophecy of the event takes place before Christianization, whereas the actual event takes place after. Similar to the division of the Old and New Testaments, Dudo's text is segmented in two: a pre-Christian Barbarian time, and a post-conversion time. By adapting the Norman history to a more traditionally approved geography (Jordanes's Scandza) and timeline construction (biblical segments), Dudo restores the Christian space-time that was previously lost in the Norman cultural transition.

²⁰ Rix, *The Barbarian North in Medieval Imagination*, p. 30. See also the contributions by Webb and Avdagic in this volume regarding Thule and the Hyperboreans.

²¹ *Olympian ode* 3.25–35. See the fuller discussion of Pindar's characterisation of the Hyperboreans in Sandin's essay in this volume.

²² For a study of various cultural space-times, see Shûichi, *Le Temps et l'espace dans la culture japonaise*, which includes the classical Greek perception of time (see pp. 28–30).

²³ Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution*, p. 13.

²⁴ Albu, *The Normans in their Histories*, p. 41: 'Dudo gives almost the final word to Richard when he interprets his own acts as the Christian fulfillment of his grandfather's visions (4.126)'.

Mapmaking of the North: The Landscape, the Social Network, and its Ferocious People

The geographic translation of Jordanes's account to Normandy has left the medieval tradition with what Lucien Musset calls a 'cacogeography'.²⁵ Under Dudo's influence, the Northmen migrants are indifferently called *Dani*, *Daci*, or *Dacigenae* when they are said to be coming from Denmark (called *Dacia*), and *Norwagenses*, *Northguegigenae*, *Norici*, or *Northwigenae* when they are coming from Norway (called *Northwega* by Orderic Vitalis). Later, Wace uses the vernacular terms *Denois* for the people of *Danemarche*, and *Norrois* for the people of *Norvenge*. The first designations are vague and were mostly used as synonyms of *barbari*. Wace and Vitalis added precision during the eleventh century.

Still drawing on Jordanes, Dudo describes *Dacia* as 'protected by very high alps in the manner of a crown and after the fashion of a city'.²⁶ Eventually in Stephen of Rouen's *Draco Normannicus* (1168), Denmark (still referred to as *Dacia*) is described as a non-mountainous kingdom flanked with seas, where eight cities cultivated a rich soil.²⁷ Stephen of Rouen details the cold which will not allow grapes to grow, as well as the harbours, the fishes, and the forests. Orderic Vitalis also appears to have collected some first-hand information regarding the origin of the Northmen. He describes Norway (*Northwega*) as a big island with five cities (Bergen, Konghelle, Trondheim, Sarpsborg, and Oslo; plus Tønsberg,²⁸ which is now part of Denmark), but continues to refer to Denmark as *Dacia*. He goes on to note that the Norwegians are Christians and lists the lands attached to Norway: Orkney Islands, *Finlanda* (for Finnmark not Finland), Iceland, Greenland, and *Gollanda* (probably Götaland more than Gotland).²⁹

Whatever the geographical accuracy, the Normans' land of origin is a place where all forces converged to expel them. First of all, their land is defined by the North Wind. Just like the Hyperboreans of Pindar, the Normans 'are also named Northman [*Nortmanni*], because in their language the north wind [*Boreas*] is

²⁵ Musset, 'La Cacogéographie des Normands et la Normandie'.

²⁶ Dudo, *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum*, ed. by Lair, p. 143: 'prope moenia civitatis oppugnare coepit'. Benoit de Saint-Maure also uses this image in *Chronique des Ducs de Normandie*, v. 352.

²⁷ Stephen of Rouen, *Draco Normannicus*, ed. by Omont, p. 24.

²⁸ Orderic Vitalis, *Historiae ecclesiasticae*, ed. by Le Prévost and Delisle, iv, 27: 'Berga, Cuneghella, Copenga, Burgus et Alsa, Turesberga'.

²⁹ Orderic Vitalis, *Historiae ecclesiasticae*, ed. by Le Prévost and Delisle, iv, 29.

called *North* and *Mann* means man; therefore the denomination of Nortmanni means men of the North.³⁰ Second, because of its overpopulation, largely due — according to Dudo — to the practice of polygamous marriages, human sacrifices occur.³¹ Third, they worship a god called Thor (except in Vitalis's and Wace's accounts, since the Scandinavian lands were Christianized by time of their writing).³² The North is therefore described as an impossible place fulfilling the archetype of the non-Christian land. People willing to be saved are expected to escape. This is a key aspect of the Norman history: the Vikings were pursuing the will of God; towards salvation as far as Rollo is concerned.

In the North, the barbarians are surrounded by specific characters. William of Jumièges, for instance, lists the Gothic kings of Dacia as Zeutas, Dicineus, and Zalmoxis (who first appeared in Herodotus's *Histories* of the fifth century BCE). Also originating in the North was the god Mars, who 'they used to appease with effusions of human blood'.³³ This account based on Jordanes brings Dacia, Zalmoxis, and Mars together, thus creating a coherent scheme of migration, immortality, and war.³⁴

Furthermore, Antenor — the protagonist of Virgil's *Aeneid* who escaped from Troy as a traitor — is referred to as a genealogical root: 'Igitur Daci nuncupantur a suis Danai, vel Dani, glorianturque se ex Antenore progenitos; qui quondam Trojæ finibus depopulatis, mediis elapsus Achivis, Illyricos fines penetravit cum suis' (Thus the Dacians are called by their own people Greeks or Danes, and they boast that they are descended from Antenor. He entered with his followers the Illyrian borders, having slipped away from the midst of the Achaeans who pillaged Troy).³⁵ Dudo organized the characterization of the Norman protagonists according to Virgil's narrative structure: Hasting is the new Antenor, Rollo is the new Aeneas, and Richard I the new Ascanius (Aeneas's son).³⁶

³⁰ *Gesta* 1.1(4).

³¹ Dudo, *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum*, ed. by Lair, p. 130: 'cujus exhausto sanguine, ex more suo, sua suorumque capita linientes, librabant celeriter navium carbasa ventis'.

³² Dudo, *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum*, ed. by Lair, p. 129: 'venerantes Thor, deum suum'.

³³ Albu, *The Normans in their Histories*, p. 62, citing William of Jumièges.

³⁴ All three imaginary schemes also 'have connections with wolves and exiles', according to Albu, *The Normans in their Histories*, p. 62; based on Eliade, *Zalmoxis*.

³⁵ Dudo, *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum*, ed. by Lair, p. 130; the English translation is by Lifshitz.

³⁶ Searle, 'Fact and Pattern in Heroic History', p. 126. See also Bouet, 'Dudon de Saint-Quentin et Virgile'.

According to Emily Albu, Hasting, like all Vikings and therefore all Normans, is Antenor's true heir, and passages describing the horror of night raids by Viking bands even echo Virgil's description of the fall of Troy.³⁷ Here we find the themes of war and exodus as an even older Greek root of origin: the war of Troy and its consequences as a starting point.

Emily Albu also notes 'a persistent wolf imagery' attached to the protagonists: 'Dudo's favourite metaphor for the northern peoples when they go marauding is that of the ravening wolf.'³⁸ This wolf-like ferocity is linked to their pagan lifestyle. Hasting in particular is charged with a list of wrongdoings:

Illi namque Daci relato ritu olim a suis expulsi, qua suos tractus Francia
protense expargit, cum duce Anstinuo [al., Hastingo] ferociter appulsi.
Hic sacer atque ferox nimium crudelis et atrox.
Pestifer, infestus, torvus, trux, flagitiosus.
Pestifer inconstansque, procax, ventosus et exlex.
Lethifer, immitis, praecautus, ubique rebellis.
Proditor incentorque mali, duplex simulator.
Impius et tumidus, pallax, deceptor et audax.
Furcifer, incestus, infrenis, litigiosus.
Pestiferique mali augmentum, doli incrementum.
Non atramento, verum carbone notandus.
Et tanto scelere ante alios immanior omnes,
Quantus ad astrigerum tendit suspectus Olympum

(For these Dacians, once ejected from their own lands by means of the reported rite, have savagely landed with duke Anstign [Hasting] where Francia extensively spreads out its tracts. So much does this accursed and headstrong, extremely cruel and harsh, destructive, troublesome, wild, ferocious, infamous, destructive and inconstant, brash, conceited and lawless, death-dealing, rude, everywhere on guard, rebellious traitor and kindler of evil, this double-faced hypocrite and ungodly, arrogant, seductive and foolhardy deceiver, this lewd, unbridled, contentious rascal, aggravate towards the starry height of heaven an increase of destructive evil and an augmentation of deceit and through such accursed deeds is he more monstrous than all the rest, that he ought to be marked not by ink but by charcoal.)³⁹

³⁷ Dudo, *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum*, ed. by Lair, pp. 131–32; *Aeneid* 2.265; discussed in Albu, *The Normans in their Histories*, p. 15.

³⁸ Albu, *The Normans in their Histories*, p. 41. William also uses the wolf imagery 'which he links explicitly to pagan predation and scheming'. The biblical influence is obvious: 'I send you forth as lambs among wolves' (Luke 10. 3).

³⁹ Dudo, *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum*, ed. by Lair, p. 130. The English translation is by Lifshitz.

The wolf metaphor is frequently used to describe Norse men, such as Hasting, Rollo, his son William as well as his grandson Richard I. Moreover, Vikings and Christian Normans alike use wolfish artifices and hunting techniques.⁴⁰ Despite their Christianization, and although their migration is depicted as an exodus towards salvation, the Normans still maintain this untamed otherness.

Merged with the archetype of the barbarians, the environmental and natural conditions of 'those who were born where the north wind comes from', as Wace put it, contribute to their archetype. They are warriors like Mars, indestructible like Zalmoxis, and as ferocious as wolves. The mythological map-making masterminded by Dudo is drawn by a rhetorical discourse regarding a cultural behaviour that had yet to be adjusted to a Christian perspective. What was perceived and described under these classical storylines was an unknown attitude towards death, unusual fighting tactics, and a misunderstood perceptual culture.

*The Sea is the Key: The Coasts, the Seine Harbours,
and the Maritime Mindscape*

With little material evidence of early Norman settlement, the perspective of the settlers is hard to discern.⁴¹ No sign of the famous *thing* governing assembly (Old Norse: *þing*), nor of the *hirð* social hierarchy, have been found. Yet, the lack of archaeological finds regarding a sizeable Scandinavian settlement does not mean it did not happen. Scholars have argued for extensive colonization both in England and Normandy.⁴² Dudo's *De moribus* — the only source reporting the 911 treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte — states that the city of Rouen and its surroundings were granted to the group of Vikings led by Rollo.⁴³ What is known for certain is that the earliest official record confirming a Northmen settlement is dated the year 918. According to Eleanor Searle though, Normandy did not take shape before 933.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Albu, *The Normans in their Histories*, p. 43: 'When Hasting tricks the Frankish army into attacking Rollo's forces, he speaks "undergirded with poisonous and wolfish artifice" (*Venenifera vulpinaque arte suffultus*); Dudo: 2.13.

⁴¹ For a recent review, see Mazet-Harhoff, 'The Incursion of the Vikings'.

⁴² Bates, *Normandy before 1066*.

⁴³ Searle, 'Frankish Rivalries and Norse Warriors', pp. 203–04.

⁴⁴ Searle, 'Frankish Rivalries and Norse Warriors', p. 211.

The first granted territory was as a confinement of sorts; a decade later the Seine Vikings gained more lands. In 924, according to chronicler Flodoard (893–966), territories of the Bessin and Maine fell under their influence, followed by the Cotentin, and the Avranchin (in 933) where independent bands of Vikings were previously settled. Then, around the 960s, the Seine Vikings spread out of Upper Normandy with help of new Viking waves from the Danelaw and the Northern Isles.⁴⁵ According to some scholars,⁴⁶ those waves explain the tenth-century state of disruption.

On this basis, the nature of settlement and the assimilation process have been widely discussed. Some scholars have proposed that the Northmen ‘stepped into the shoes of the Franks as lords of the manor in many villages drawing their rents and dues from a native peasantry whose language was neither Frankish nor Scandinavian, but French.’⁴⁷ This perspective argues for an aristocratic process of settlement.⁴⁸ Other scholars who drew from the onomastic evidence, and compared the Norman situation to that of the Danelaw scenario, have suggested an ‘intensive exploitation of marginal lands’ by Vikings settlers.⁴⁹ In both cases, it is also understood that the Scandinavian settlement was restricted to specific areas, mostly near the coast, while other larger parts of the territory were hardly occupied at all.⁵⁰

To construct a more detailed picture, Gillian Fellows-Jensen looked at the place-names evidence.⁵¹ According to her findings, the majority of Viking settlers were from Danish origin, some of them being accompanied by Englishmen and perhaps insular Britons. She also argues for the presence of men from the Atlantic islands in western and central Normandy.⁵² Moreover, four centuries before the Viking settlement — before the Franks took possession of the lands

⁴⁵ Searle, ‘Fact and Pattern’, p. 132.

⁴⁶ Musset, ‘Naissance de la Normandie’, pp. 102–03; Le Patourel, *The Norman Empire*, p. 283.

⁴⁷ Davis, *The Normans and their Myth*, p. 23.

⁴⁸ See, among others, Stenton, ‘The Scandinavian Colonies in England and Normandy’.

⁴⁹ De Boüard, ‘De la Neustrie carolingienne à la Normandie féodale’. See also Bates, *Normandy before 1066*, p. 18.

⁵⁰ Le Patourel, *The Norman Empire*, p. 282.

⁵¹ Fellows-Jensen, ‘Scandinavian Place-Names and Viking Settlement in Normandy’; the text was updated and translated into French as ‘Les Noms de lieux d’origine scandinave et la colonisation viking en Normandie’.

⁵² Fellows-Jensen, ‘Scandinavian Place-Names and Viking Settlement in Normandy’, pp. 133–34.

— a Saxon presence was recorded in western Normandy, making the identification of Germanic origins of the place-names difficult.⁵³ From this perspective, the territory designed as Normandy during the tenth century was a mesh of plural Germanic-based (northern) cultural layers.

Looking for material evidence of the so-called Scandinavian settlement of year 911 in Neustria, Laurent Mazet-Harhoff published what he called ‘one long scheme of intentions for future research’.⁵⁴ His work relied on a study of local toponyms, a chronological examination of the harbours of the lower Seine, and a model of the ancient landscape (Roman roads, pre-nineteenth-century Seine shoreline, and La Tène fortification mounds), as well as the cognitive background of the Scandinavian seamen. From this trans-disciplinary perspective, his essay presents four locations of plausible Viking occupation along the Seine: between Saint-Wandrille and Jumièges, the isle of Oissel (near Rouen), the Pître and Pont-de-l’Arche zone (where a fortified bridge was reportedly built by the Franks to prevent further incursions), and the meander of Jeubosse. A woman’s grave, three hoards, and several weapons were found along these zones, thus the lower Seine — due to its link to the sea — is a logical starting point of future investigation.

Meanwhile, as she studied Old Norse contributions to the French language, Elisabeth Ridel found significant traces of immaterial heritage in the Old Norman maritime lexicon.⁵⁵ According to Ridel, the Norse settlers ‘brought along more than words. They gave us a genuine culture of the sea: a nautical culture with terms describing the seascape, a halieutic culture with words detailing the marine species and the fishing material, and a technical culture with an entire vocabulary dedicated to the ships and the naval construction’.⁵⁶ For instance, in order to refer to the new types of ships imported with the Norse settlers, the old Norman dialect used the word *esneque* derived from the Old Norse *snekkja*, *eschei* derived from *skeið*, and *kenar* derived from *knorr*. Those specific terms were needed to complete a Latin lexical field of ship types composed of *nave*, *batel*, *vaissel*, or *pinasse*. Orderic Vitalis, for instance, seems to know the technical name of the Scandinavian cargo ship *knorr*, which he trans-

⁵³ Fellows-Jensen, ‘Scandinavian Place-Names and Viking Settlement in Normandy’, p. 113; referring to Gregory of Tours’s mentions of Saxons of Bayeux in 578 and 590.

⁵⁴ Mazet-Harhoff, ‘The Incursion of the Vikings’, p. 118. With one key question in mind: ‘Would early settlers leave recognizable remains?’ (p. 83).

⁵⁵ Ridel, *Les Vikings et les mots*, p. 65.

⁵⁶ Ridel, ‘Bateaux de type scandinave en Normandie’, p. 297. Translation is mine.

lates into Latin as *canardus*: 'Quatuor naves magnae, quas canardos vocant, de Northwegia in Anglia appulsae sunt' (Four great ships, which are called canards, from Norway landed in England).⁵⁷

This new adapted vocabulary was brought along with nautical skills previously unknown to the inhabitants of Neustria. This means that the settlers — who were mostly seamen — entered a cultural territory devoid of their traditional knowledge. Just like Dudo facing the desert, they were themselves confronted with a void to fill. The difference was that this void did not belong to a written (thus, fixed in time and preserved on a long scale) tradition, but to a material and technical (making it more or less ephemeral) sphere.

What is meaningful with the maritime vocabulary adjustment is that the Roman-based language before the settlement of the Northmen did not possess a lexicon capable of designating what parts of the Scandinavian culture were. Beyond the nautical skills and techniques brought by the settlers, a different perception of the maritime landscape was imported and filled this cultural void.

Regarding the boats, three main terms (*eschei*, *esneque*, and *kenar*) were translated from the Old Norse (*skeið*, *snekkja*, *knorr*). According to Judith Jesch's in-depth study of Viking nautical vocabulary, *skeið* refers to a long warship and means 'that which cuts through the water' or 'a piece of wood long and sword-shaped'.⁵⁸ The word *snekkja* refers to a smaller warship. Its etymology, according to Katrin Their (quoted by Judith Jesch), could be from the Germanic root **snak*- 'a sharp protuberance, nose'.⁵⁹ Lastly, *knorr* appears to be a 'broader type of ship that could both sail across the ocean and carry a heavy cargo'.⁶⁰

To draw a parallel, the Latin terminology is not that illustrated or functional. The medieval *nave* — or *navis* — is a generic term which gave rise to *navy* in English or *navire* in French;⁶¹ these terms being synonymous with *vessel*. This generic etymology does not refer to the shape or to the function of the ship but to its substantial attribute. The ship is a body travelling from a location A to a location B. It's a container, a matrix. The *nave* of a church belongs to the same imaginary field via an isomorphic process: the church contains the

⁵⁷ Orderic Vitalis, *Historiae ecclesiasticae*, ed. by Le Prévost and Delisle, III, 406.

⁵⁸ Jesch, *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age*, p. 124.

⁵⁹ Jesch, *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age*, p. 126.

⁶⁰ Jesch, *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age*, p. 103.

⁶¹ Du Cange and others, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, v, col. 579c. To name smaller boats and barks, medieval Latin uses *batel* and *batellus*, terms from Old English *bat* (boat, ship, vessel) and from Proto-Germanic **bait*-.

presence of God, just like Noah's Ark, one of its archetypes, thus they are both vessels (it is also true with the body of Mary, the sepulchre, the whale, etc.).⁶²

The Norse-speaking seamen brought a different cultural perception of space-time. Their mindscape was shaped on an experienced knowledge of the maritime world. Their warships ('that which cuts through the water') were defined by the way they were sailing through the sea. The terms *skeið* and *snek-kja* referred to the encounter between the hull and the water. The names carried the memory of an attention to the way the moving object interacted with its environment. This also applies to the skaldic poetry from which most kenning (rhetorical poetic images) would illustrate the way a ship meets the sea. Depending on its state of interaction with its environment, the ship can be represented as an animal (e.g., 'the ox of the deep' or 'the horse of the wind'), as another object (e.g., 'the ski of the ocean' or 'the chariot of rollers'), or as a tree (e.g., 'the terribly cold tree of the wave').⁶³ The same boat becomes a ski when navigating on calm seas, and a horse when confronted to tumultuous waters. As anthropologist Tim Ingold remarks about environmental perceptions, 'they feel their way through a world that is itself in motion, continually coming into being through the combined action of human and non-human agencies'.⁶⁴

In a nutshell, what fundamentally differentiates the culture of the Vikings from the culture of the Christians is their perception inherited from their language and their relationship with their environment. Christian writers defended a continental Latin-based perspective, while Norse-speaking seamen disrupted it with a sea-based perception. One is linearly rooted to a point of origin and looking forward to an end, while the other depends on phenomenological dynamics from which they shaped a way-finding type of being into the world. This is in accordance with a study of the human perception by Tim Ingold: 'What the first approach [map-making] explains through positing an isomorphism between structures in the world and structures in the mind, the second [way-finding] explains as the unfolding of a field of relations established through the immersion of the actor-perceiver within a given environmental context'.⁶⁵ Here lies the so-called otherness of the Northmen.

⁶² The Greek terms *naus* (ship) and *naos* (temple) also carry this type of sacred valence. For a detailed analysis of the Christian rhetoric, see Auger, 'Les Figures de proue zoomorphes'.

⁶³ All examples are found on the website 'Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages': <<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/skaldic/db.php?if=default&table=kenning&val=SHIP>> [accessed 21 September 2017].

⁶⁴ Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*, Part II: 'Dwelling, Introduction'.

⁶⁵ Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*, Part I: 'Livelihood, Chapter 13'.

One question thus remains: how would this other cultural perception translate into material items in a territory where the Norse language was soon abandoned and where the Christian-based social structures remained dominant? The coastal lands of Cotentin (lower Normandy) might have a clue. Art historian Maylis Baylé has noticed a group of Norman sculptures picturing interlaces that dates back to the very end of the eleventh century and the first twenty years of the twelfth century:

Capitals in the nave of the parish church of Sainte-Marie-du-Mont and in the former priory of Saint-Côme-du-Mont exemplify such sculptures. These interlace patterns are made of very thin, threadlike ribbons, and volutes often play the part of links between two threads. Such interlaces seem at first sight entirely disorganised, but this disorganisation was clearly intentional. Threads end either in a volute or in a small snake's head.⁶⁶

While interlace patterns are very common in Celtic, Scandinavian, and Lombard cultures, they were sporadically used in Normandy. Maylis Baylé found three sites (Carolingian monastery Saint-Samson-sur-Risle, tenth-century monastery Evrecy, and eleventh-century abbey-church of Bernay) that showed regular interlaces, but nothing like those loosely arranged ornaments found in the Cotentin. A broader research project led Baylé to connect them with other patterns found in Caen (La Trinité Abbey and the Exchequer, first part of the twelfth century), in Falaise and the mouth of the Seine. These twelfth-century cases, like the previous ones, do not cover the whole capital's block; and, instead of 'loosely arranged ribbons', they display plain grilles and interlaces with only a few loops, and with an entirely disorganized appearance.

To the extent that both the Cotentin and the mouth of the Seine were occupied by a significant Scandinavian population, Baylé argues that these interlace patterns were rooted in an Anglo-Scandinavian tradition and inspired by manuscript illuminations, stating that:

Threads end either in a volute or in a small snake's head. They sometimes hang from a curious half ring which can be seen in representations of ropes on Viking ships. [...] The coastal position of most of the above-mentioned churches may be significant. A slab from Tingstäde (Gotland), showing an arrangement of ropes in the form of the rigging of a Viking ship, provides a more satisfactory comparison with these puzzling Norman interlaces.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Baylé, 'Interlace Patterns in Norman Romanesque Sculpture', pp. 187–88.

⁶⁷ Baylé, 'Interlace Patterns in Norman Romanesque Sculpture', p. 191.

The reminiscence here is above all aesthetic, and only the proximity of the sea allows us to suggest a nautical referent carried by a community tied to the shoreline.

To conclude, most of what is known of the settlers is intangible and cannot be found in books. It lies in their relationship with the sea which structured their vision of the world. This explains the cultural gap and the sense of otherness staged by the medieval historians. In order to describe a culture and a being into the world they did not understand or approve of, the writers chose to rely on the classical representation of the barbarians passed on by the written tradition. They applied their own cultural concepts onto a rhetorical desert inspired by the acts of violence perpetrated by the Scandinavian intruders. By doing so, they intentionally (and on the Dukes' request) integrated the men of the North into the Christian storyline. If the narrative structure is, indeed, based on written Christian knowledge, most of the images used to describe the barbarians fall within a mythological 'bricolage'⁶⁸ borrowed from the Greek and Latin antiquity. As non-Christian, the pre-baptism Northmen belonged to a fantastical other world polarized by infernal elements: sacrifice, blood, war, cold wind, polygamy. In a nutshell, the medieval vision of the North as seen from Normandy mirrors the Old Testament and follows the Christian liturgy.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ A term introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, p. 21, and used by Rix, *The Barbarian North in Medieval Imagination*, p. 21 n. 36, who explains it as 'the improvisation upon existing elements, borrowing from previous traditions to create a new narrative'.

⁶⁹ It's no coincidence that the door of the North transept in several Cluniac churches in France led to cemeteries. See, for instance, Esquieu, 'Les Circulations dans le chevet et le transept d'une église clunisienne'.

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THE NORTH IN THE LATIN HISTORY WRITING OF TWELFTH-CENTURY NORWAY

Steffen Hope¹

In the twelfth century, Norway became a high medieval kingdom through the establishment of the archbishopric of Nidaros and the increased sophistication of royal power.² With the introduction of primogeniture and coronation, the Norwegian kingship took on a form similar to what we find in Germany and England.³ This was a kingship supported by the church, and the introduction of rituals such as the coronation is a testament both to the strength of the archbishopric, and also to the effort of the archbishops to remodel the kingdom of Norway into a more modern, Christian kingdom. This strengthening of the archdiocese was not only political but also manifested itself in the archbishop's increased control of the church organization in Norway and in the Atlantic islands,⁴ and also through the emergence of a new literary culture. This culture had its centre at the archbishop's court in Nidaros and operated within a clearly pronounced ecclesiastical framework which shows in the fact that sev-

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² For the details of this development, see Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold*, pp. 229ff.

³ See Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold*, pp. 165–70.

⁴ For an overview of the strengthening of the church organization, see Beistad, "Han sjøl dreiv hardt på med saken".

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eral of its works were aimed at religious practice.⁵ It was this clearly pronounced ecclesiastical framework which makes the new literary culture distinct from the literature produced before the establishment of the Nidaros archdiocese. The older literature also comprised works in Latin as well as in the vernacular, but it did not come about within a similar institutional framework.⁶ The new culture, which could only have emerged within the new framework of the archdiocese, can be identified in two major points.

First, the literature was influenced by the Latin literature of Western Christendom in its form, style, and references to near-contemporary works in Latin.⁷ In this way, the new Norwegian literature became part of a wider European tradition, bringing ideas from abroad into the native discourse. Furthermore, because the new literature was chiefly in Latin and could be distributed within an ecclesiastical network, it also became accessible to a wider European audience, thus potentially strengthening the ties between the archbishopric and the papacy.

Second, since the new literature arose within the culture of the church and the archiepiscopal court, its view of history was very often marked by a degree of exegesis, through which the history of Norway became woven into the greater history of Christendom, both by including material from beyond Norway and through expounding Norway's part of holy history, *Heilsgeschichte*, which could be seen abroad through the works of the saints and the church. In the Norwegian literature, one of the central points in this narrative was the figure of Olaf Haraldsson, the patron saint of the Norwegian kingdom.

Since the new literature employed the *topoi* and the historical vision of Western Christendom, this also meant that the writers of these new works relied on previous exegetical and geographical descriptions of their own home region: the North. Classical literature and Christian exegesis alike had a long tradition for making sense of the North, as it were, and the historical writers of medieval Norway were faced with a need to negotiate this tradition and the fact that Norway had now become a part of Western Christendom.

In this chapter, I will look at three main works of Latin historical writing from twelfth-century Norway — *Historia Norwegie*, *Historia antiquitatem*

⁵ See, for instance, *The Old Norwegian Homily Book and the Office for Saint Olaf*.

⁶ For instance, the chronicle of Norwegian kings by Sæmundur fróði (1056–1133) written around 1125 was in Latin, while his contemporary colleague Ari Thorgilsson (1067–1148) wrote in Old Norse.

⁷ *Historia Norwegie* refers to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Anglorum*, while Theodoricus Monachus refers to several French works.

regem Norwagiensem, and *Passio et miraculi Beati Olavi* — and I will consider how the writers of these works engaged with the exegetical concept of North while writing the history of their own northern kingdom. My argument is that while these writers relied both on the classical and the biblical traditions, albeit to varying degrees, they employed these traditions distinctly from writers from outside Scandinavia. This is partly attributable to the fact that the Norwegian writers were describing a region which they themselves inhabited, facilitating a more nuanced presentation of the northern geography. The description of the North in twelfth-century Norwegian history writing in Latin was also shaped by the cult of Saint Olaf Haraldsson, an exegetical focal point in the interpretation of the North in biblical terms.

History Writing and Exegesis: The East Becomes North

The term ‘history writing’ in the Middle Ages can sometimes cause some confusion. In this article I focus on two histories and one saint-biography, comparing them with both historiographical and saint-biographical works from previous periods.⁸ It is worth emphasizing that in the Middle Ages, the writing of history was not only a way of recording events but also a form of exegesis, by which God’s plan could be detected and understood. This Christian history writing was inspired both by the Jewish biblical tradition and the Roman tradition, and it was also shaped by the formative works of Augustine of Hippo and Orosius. The saint-biographical tradition emerged at around the same time and became a way in which God’s plan could be mapped. In general we can distinguish two major trends: the history of the holy men and women as represented by Augustine, and the history of empires, as represented by Orosius.⁹

When Latin history writing was established in Norway, its authors, as stated, drew on both classical and biblical tradition when describing the North. Based on these two traditions, this article expounds upon the main features of three types of North: the biblical North, the classical North, and the geographical North.

⁸ Note that I use the term ‘saint-biography’ intentionally here, rather than ‘hagiography’. The term ‘hagiography’ is a modern coinage that does not accurately represent the textual category it is meant to cover, because it can easily be defined too narrowly (by only applying it to saints’ lives) and also too broadly (by making it synonymous with panegyric). There does not seem to be a scholarly consensus among medievalists in how the term should be applied, and so I have instead decided to use ‘saint-biography’ and ‘saint-biographical’ instead.

⁹ See Kretschmer, *Rewriting Roman History*, p. 232.

The Biblical North and Christian Exegesis

The biblical typology of the North was established in the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 14, the north becomes the aspired seat of Lucifer from which he will rise to Heaven and challenge God:

And thou saidst in thy heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the most High. (Isaiah 14.13–14)

In the Book of Jeremiah, however, the North is depicted as a pot containing evil armies by which the Lord punishes mankind for its iniquities:

And the word of the Lord came to me a second time, saying: What seest thou? I see a boiling cauldron, and the face thereof from the face of the north. And the Lord said to me: from the north shall an evil break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. (Jeremiah 1.13–14)

This image of great armies swarming down from the north is rendered more concretely in Ezekiel 38, in which we are told of King Gog of the land Magog, situated in the Far North (Ezekiel 38.15). After chastising Gog, the Lord uses him to chastise the people of Israel, in turn, when they lapse into irreligion. The description of Gog's armies in Ezekiel 38.4, horsemen coated in mail and carrying spears, shields, and swords must have resonated strongly with later generations of Christians as they were exposed to the attacks of Goths, Huns, Vikings, and so on. To those who suffered these attacks there were two main points of the Old Testament prophecies which were universally applicable: First, North was synonymous with evil invaders and plunderers; second, these evil tribes of the Far North could be sent against nations of the south as divine punishment.¹⁰

Classical History Writing

Roman knowledge of the world beyond the Empire relied to a great extent on Greek material. During the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, and also in the period following, the Romans came increasingly into contact with distant and exotic geographies, amplifying the imagination of Roman geographers,

¹⁰ David Fraesdorff claims that the identification of Gog and Magog with people of the north and north-east is at the latest found in Flavius Josephus in *Antiquitatum Iudaicarum libri*. See Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, p. 312.

historiographers, and even poets (whose works often also take the form of history). The works of these writers had a significant impact on how writers in the Middle Ages envisioned the world, and they were greatly responsible for the names that the medieval writers employed in their histories. Two points of particular relevance here are the names Dacia and Scythia, referring respectively to modern-day Romania and a vast, loosely defined section of Asia north of the Black Sea and Caucasus. In the course of the Middle Ages, these places became identified with Denmark and Sweden.¹¹

The Roman writers and their eventual Christian successors imagined these two places, as well as other localities, as distant and alien, and the people and the animals inhabiting them were accordingly different from the Romans. This is hardly surprising, since Pliny tells us that the northern zone of the world, the *septentrio*, is marked by cold and eternal frost, and Solinus says of the same that 'sola terrarum non novit vices temporum nec de caelo aliud accipit quam hiemem sempiternam' (the soil of the earth knows no changes in the seasons, nor does the sky receive anything but endless winter).¹² These visions of the Far North were sustained by marvellous details whose orientalist flavour added to their strangeness. For instance, in his *Natural History*, Pliny offers a detailed description of the peoples and marvels of Scythia, which includes the one-eyed Arimaspi, the anthropophagi, and the griffins, much of which is taken from Herodotus and which was brought into medieval knowledge through Solinus's *Collectanea rerum mirabilium*, also known as *Polyhistor*.¹³ Through these descriptions, both Pliny and Solinus extended the Greek geographical tradition into their own respective times and transmitted its taxonomies of peoples and places into an increasingly expanding world.

In Book IV, Pliny talks about the islands north of Pontus, and he describes how we must pass the Riphean Mountains and travel along the shore of the northern ocean before we reach Scythia. From there we come to the island of Baltia and the surrounding smaller islands which are inhabited by such strange peoples as the egg-eaters, the horse-feet, and the big-ears.¹⁴ Beyond Baltia we encounter a Germanic people, the Ingevoni by the vast Sevo Mountain, and then there is the island of 'Scadinavia'. Pliny meticulously describes the stages

¹¹ For the development of this confusion, see Hemmingsen, 'Middelaldergeografien og *Historia Norwegie*'. See also Auger's chapter in this volume

¹² Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, II. 111. Solinus, *Collectanea*, xv. 21.

¹³ Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, VII. 2. Solinus, *Collectanea*, xv. 22.

¹⁴ Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, v, 33.

in this journey, but the numbers and the dimensions are mere abstractions. The final result is nonetheless that Scythia, Germania, and Scandinavia are put quite closely together and thus the Far East and the Far North essentially merge into one and the same vast, alien, frost-ridden place. Pliny's Scandinavia disappeared in later centuries until Jordanes's *Getica* mentioned the island Scandza.

Latin History Writing in the North before the Twelfth Century

Latin history writing had great impact on literature which can be reasonably classified as northern. Since this northern literature provides something of a preamble to what happened in Norway in the twelfth century, it is worth dwelling a bit on a couple of these works, in particular Abbo's *Passio sancti Eadmundi* and Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hamaburgensis ecclesiae pontificis*.

Passio sancti Eadmundi

We see the converging of the classical geography, biblical geography, and contemporary events perhaps most clearly in the *Passio sancti Eadmundi*, written in the 980s by the French monk Abbo of Fleury. In its fifth chapter Abbo provides an account of the Danes, their homeland, and their chieftains as men for whom no divine mercy was known because they came from that part of the world from which the devil sought to become like the God.¹⁵ This allusion to Isaiah 14.14 connects the geographical north as it appeared to Western Christendom with the typology of the Old Testament prophets and their representations of the devil. Abbo goes on to say that this confirms the prophecy of Jeremiah 1.14 that an evil comes from the North.

After connecting the people of the North to the proper typology, Abbo places the Danes near the anthropophagi of classical tradition, saying that there are many nations between Scythia and the Hyperborean Mountains, and from these mountains will come the Antichrist.¹⁶ Abbo's text is of great significance to us, because he overtly connects the biblical typology of the North with its traditional depiction in classical geography, and one of the results is that the Hyperboreans — of whom Solinus says 'amant quietem, non amant laedere' ([t]hey love quietness and they love not war) — are dwelling in the region of Antichrist,¹⁷

¹⁵ Abbo of Fleury, *Passio sancti Eadmundi*, p. 71.

¹⁶ Abbo of Fleury, *Passio sancti Eadmundi*, p. 72.

¹⁷ Solinus, *Collectanea*, xvii, 1.

and staples of the wild north such as Scythia and the Antropophagi are brought into the same section of the world as the Danes. Consequently, not only are the biblical North and the classical North brought together as one and the same, they are also fused into the geographical North.

Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificis

The next work of great significance to our purpose here is *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificis* by Adam of Bremen, a canon who wrote this historiography primarily as a propagandist tool to bolster the claims of the Hamburg church to the right of appointing bishops to the recently converted North.¹⁸ For us, the most important part of Adam's work is the fourth book, a description of the islands of the north. Here, Adam fuses detailed local knowledge with hallmarks of the classical north. Adam claims to have received some knowledge at the court of the Danish king, even from the king himself, and he also relies to a great extent on Solinus and Martianus Capella, along with classical poets such as Virgil, Lucan, and Horace — although these classical sources are not always equally strictly adhered to.¹⁹ Adam also uses *Vita Karoli* and *Vita Ansgari* for some of his general description.

The consequence of this fusion is that the classical north, as we saw with Abbo, is uprooted from its original position in the hinterland of the Black Sea and projected onto the contemporary north of Adam's time.²⁰ As for the biblical north, there are only two references in the *Gesta*. The first is in Book I, Chapter 26, in which Ansgar's conversion of the Swedes is taken to fulfil the prophecy of Ezekiel in which fire is sent to Gog and Magog. The second case is in Book II, Chapter 57, which deals with Olaf Haraldsson's expulsion of pagan sorcerers whom Adam refers to as 'satellites Antichristi' (assistants of the devil), which may have invoked the biblical image of Antichrist in the North, even though no overt reference is made to Jeremiah.²¹ Ultimately, despite these two

¹⁸ See Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, pp. 144–45.

¹⁹ David Fraesdorff points out that the himantopods — whom Adam places in Russia — are found in North Africa according to Martianus and Solinus. See Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, pp. 306–07.

²⁰ For a more detailed discussion on this reliance on antiquity, see Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, pp. 290–93; p. 298.

²¹ Adam of Bremen, *Beretningen om Hamburg stift*, pp. 44–45, 101–02. For a discussion on the eschatological context of these two passages, see Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, pp. 310–12.

references, Adam is not really concerned with the biblical north and the sparsity of biblical references reflects that. This miniscule eschatological interest is possibly owing to the genre of his work: Adam's text is not an epic conversion narrative, nor a story pitting the northern peoples as diabolical antagonists against a saintly protagonist as in Abbo's *Passio*. Nonetheless, Adam brings the Northern peoples into the greater salvation history of Christianity, but this is not his main concern as it would become to the Norwegian historians of the twelfth century. Adam's text primarily highlights the success of Christianity in the North, while also providing some marvellous details that illustrate why the conversion of the North is needed.

Some of these marvellous details illustrate very well how Adam's contemporary north becomes the classical north. For instance, in his description of the Baltic Sea we are told that it runs through the Scythian lands and is also called the Barbarian Sea or the Scythian Ocean.²² He also identifies it with the Maeotian Swamps.²³

It is not only the place-names of the classical north which are brought to Northern Europe, but also its inhabitants. Citing Martianus and Solinus, Adam lists the many peoples of the eastern Baltic rim, such as Getes, Dacians, Sarmatians, Alans, Antropophagi, and Troglodytes. An addition to the text also includes the Arimaspi.²⁴ Among the western tribes are the Amazons in *Terra Feminarum* north of Sweden and the Turks.²⁵ Later he adds more monsters to this area. It is in this part of the north that we find the 'Scritefini', a hunter people who are clothed in the furs of the animals they kill; do not have houses; run faster than animals through the snow; and cannot live without snow and cold. They are situated in the midst of the Riphean Mountains which provides the barrier between the relatively civilized world of the Swedes and the Norwegians and the uncivilized, heathen, monstrous wasteland. The women are bearded, while the men are rarely seen, since they live in their forest, gnashing their teeth instead of speaking.²⁶

Adam's treatment of Norway is complex. Norway is an infertile, cold country whose inhabitants are so poor that they were once forced into piracy. But upon conversion they have learned to be content in their poverty and are favourably

²² For an overview of the term 'Scythian' and the evolution of its meaning, see Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, pp. 292–97.

²³ Adam of Bremen, *Beretningen om Hamburg stift*, pp. 192ff.

²⁴ Adam of Bremen, *Beretningen om Hamburg stift*, p. 200.

²⁵ Adam of Bremen, *Beretningen om Hamburg stift*, p. 196.

²⁶ Adam of Bremen, *Beretningen om Hamburg stift*, pp. 211–12.

compared with the patriarchs who also laboured with their hands and herded sheep and cattle. We see in some of this an echo of the classical image of the peace-loving Hyperboreans.²⁷ Not all Norwegians are like that, however. Adam spends some time describing the pagan Northerners, most likely the Sami, who are said to be great magicians, able to lure great sea-beasts ashore. This part of the country is also a place of natural marvels, and we are told of black foxes, white hares, martens, and white bears that live under water.²⁸ To Adam these creatures are seemingly as exotic as the monsters on the Baltic rim. Marvels are also to be found on the islands in the great sea, such as the cyclops of an island far to the north and the Greenlanders to whom the saltwater has given a green-blue tint.²⁹

Adam also speaks briefly of Olaf Haraldsson, most blessed king and martyr. He mentions that his body rests in Nidaros, Norway's metropolis, and he explains how various pilgrims travel to his shrine. Little is said about his life or deeds beyond that he brought Christianity to Norway. This brevity might owe to an uneasiness with the strong connection Olaf had to the English church — he encountered Christianity there and brought English bishops with him — details that run counter to Adam's propagandist purposes.³⁰ The role of the English church is admitted, but not in great detail. This account nonetheless dimly adumbrates the importance of Saint Olaf in the history writing of twelfth-century Norway, a point to which I will return in the next section.

Latin History Writing in Twelfth-Century Norway

In 1152/53, the archiepiscopal see of Nidaros was established. In the following decades a strong ecclesiastically centred culture arose under the auspices of Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson (1161–88). I refer to this culture as 'ecclesiastically centred' because the literature it produced operated in various degrees within an ecclesiastical framework, written by ecclesiastics, concerned with a range of ecclesiastical topics, and drawing on the learned culture of a wider

²⁷ Adam of Bremen, *Beretningen om Hamburg stift*, pp. 195. This 'christlichen Idealzustand' is also found in Iceland. For further discussion, see Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*, p. 298.

²⁸ Adam of Bremen, *Beretningen om Hamburg stift*, p. 21.

²⁹ Adam of Bremen, *Beretningen om Hamburg stift*, pp. 217–19. Such natural marvels are a standard feature of geographical descriptions as demonstrated in Jørgensen's essay in this volume.

³⁰ For more on this issue, see Goetz, 'Constructing the Past', p. 37. See also Szabo's essay on Adam's depictions of sea creatures in this volume.

Christian Europe. This new ecclesiastical literature cannot be distinguished from literary production outside the ecclesiastical framework by way of language, for some of the ecclesiastical works were written in the vernacular (such as the *Old Norwegian Homily Book* and *Ágrip*). I hesitate to use 'secular' as a descriptive term, for even some of the ecclesiastical literature could be quite secular in its content (*Ágrip* and large sections of *Historia Norwegie*). The distinguishing feature of the new culture was therefore its ecclesiastical framework and its attachment to the contemporary and classical European literature, as we will see in the treatment of the North in these works.

One of the most significant features of the ecclesiastical culture that emerged around Archbishop Eystein was the importance of the cult of Olaf Haraldsson. As we saw in Adam of Bremen, Olaf was a saint of great renown long before the establishment of the archbishopric, and the cult had been a crucial factor in placing the archsee in Nidaros. Eystein Erlendsson was an eager administrator of Olaf's cult and was involved as an editor of the final redaction of the saint-biography of Olaf known as *Passio Olavi*. Eystein was also a modern ecclesiastic with strong ties to the reformist Papacy of his age, as were some of his closest associates. Eystein understood the historical and typological importance of Olaf Haraldsson, and this affected in part how the North was understood and treated in this new literature.

In the following, I wish to examine three works of Latin history writing from the twelfth century: the anonymous *Historia Norwegie*, Theodoricus Monachus's *Historia antiquitate regem Norwagiensem* and *Passio Olavi*, compiled by several authors over several stages.³¹ All these works deal with the idea of the North and also with the figure of Saint Olaf, but in various ways and to different degrees.

Historia Norwegie

Historia Norwegie is possibly an incomplete survival, and we do not know the author, the date, or the place of origin. These questions have troubled scholars for generations, but I favour the argument put forth by Lars Boje Mortensen that the book was written in the eastern part of Norway by an author or authors not very strongly connected to Trondheim, most likely in the period c. 1160–75.³²

³¹ Inger Ekrem argues convincingly for at least four stages. See Ekrem, 'Om *Passio Olavis* tilblivelse', pp. 121–37.

³² Mortensen, 'Introduction', p. 24.

Although *Historia Norwegie* is not a part of the literature that emerged in the city of Nidaros, it is nonetheless deeply engaged with some of the primary concerns of the ecclesiastical authority of the archbishopric as a whole, namely the continuous Christianization of Norway,³³ and also the subsuming of Norway into the salvation history of the Christian world through emphasis on their native holy men. The former issue can be seen in how *Historia Norwegie* depicts the North and its inhabitants, while the latter can be seen in the portrayal of Olaf Tryggvasson. Unlike in the other two texts discussed here, however, these two elements are not clearly connected (if at all), and the author does not employ the typology of the biblical north.

Historia Norwegie is divided in two sections, the first of which (Chapters 1–8) provides a topographical description of Norway, while the second (Chapters 9–18) is a history of the Norwegian kings up to Olaf Haraldsson's departure for Norway.

In his topographical description, the author relies to a great extent on Adam of Bremen, and Lars Boje Mortensen even states that Adam's work provided a model for *Historia Norwegie*.³⁴ This relationship is easy to see in Chapter 1 where the author refers to an Arctic island of giants and 'Virginum Terram', where virgins are impregnated by seawater, which are both elements found in Adam.³⁵ The author's treatment of the Finns seems to rely somewhat on Adam, but the author is familiar with their use of skis and sleighs, which make the Finns of *Historia Norwegie* less outlandish than Adam's Scritefini. However, the author of *Historia Norwegie* is very aware of the otherness of the Finns, and we see this most clearly in a description of their religion, or rather their 'intollabilis perfidia' (insufferable perfidy) and their 'diabolice supersticionis in magica arte exercerceant' (devilish superstition of magic art they practise).³⁶ We are told that some Finns are worshipped as prophets who give predictions that come true. This resembles the magicians in Adam's fourth book, Chapter 32.³⁷ The author then gives a detailed description of a séance in which the shaman, having failed, fell dead, his body 'niger ut ethiops' (black as an Ethiopian).³⁸

³³ Mortensen, 'Introduction', pp. 23–24. See also Ekrem, 'Essay on Date and Purpose'.

³⁴ Mortensen, 'Introduction', p. 22.

³⁵ *Historia Norwegie*, ed. by Ekrem and Mortensen, trans. by Fisher, p. 54. Adam of Bremen, *Beretningen om Hamburg stift*, pp. 199–200 and pp. 219–20, for the virgins and the giants respectively.

³⁶ *Historia Norwegie*, ed. by Ekrem and Mortensen, trans. by Fisher, pp. 60–61.

³⁷ *Historia Norwegie*, ed. by Ekrem and Mortensen, trans. by Fisher, pp. 62–63.

³⁸ *Historia Norwegie*, ed. by Ekrem and Mortensen, trans. by Fisher, p. 62.

The description of the Finns illustrates the author's concern with the spread of Christianization, and although the Finns are more soberly depicted than in Adam, their paganism is clearly accentuated as a problem, 'insufferable' as it is. A similar expression of this concern is shown already in Chapter 1, in the description of Greenland. Here we are told that the Greenlanders, who came from Iceland and are '[de] fide catholica roborata' (strengthened by Catholic faith), have encountered 'homunciones' (little men) whom they call Screlinga to the north.³⁹ This description of the native Inuits contains no sinister element either of their religion or their warlike behaviour, yet this anecdote illustrates that there are still people left to convert.

The spread of Christianity in Norway, and by the Norwegian church, was one way in which Norway found its place in the apocalyptic salvation history. Another way to establish this place was through the deeds of the holy men and women of the country, and the figurehead of this process was Olaf Haraldsson. In *Historia Norwegie*, Olaf's story is told in Chapter 18, the last chapter, but only up to the point where he returns to Norway with four bishops from England. His conversion to the Christian faith is not included, and his sainthood is referred to in passing, as when he is referred to as 'beatissmi tiranni' (most blessed tyrant).⁴⁰ In Chapter 15, Olaf is referred to as 'perpetuum regem Norwegie' (eternal king of Norway), which is a phrase referring to Olaf's status as patron saint of the country.⁴¹

Historia antiquitate regem Norwagiensem

Historia antiquitate was written by a monk, or possibly an Augustinian canon, in Nidaros called Theodoricus, and it is dedicated to Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson. The work was most likely written in the period 1177–80. *Historia antiquitate* was completed prior to the final redaction of *Passio Olavi*, as the *Historia* provides details that seem to have informed the *Passio* rather than the other way around. Throughout his work, Theodoricus employs a wide range of details from history, natural philosophy, and classical poetry. Theodoricus has been identified as the later archbishop of Nidaros Tore Gudmundsson (1206–14), who was educated at the Augustinian monastery of Saint-Victor in Paris. Patrick Gautier Dalché has recently pointed to an

³⁹ *Historia Norwegie*, ed. by Ekrem and Mortensen, trans. by Fisher, p. 55.

⁴⁰ *Historia Norwegie*, ed. by Ekrem and Mortensen, trans. by Fisher, p. 100.

⁴¹ *Historia Norwegie*, ed. by Ekrem and Mortensen, trans. by Fisher, p. 88.

influence from the cathedral school at Chartres in some of the digressions in *Historia antiquitate*.⁴²

Judging from the references and the interspersed vignettes of natural philosophy, it is clear that Theodoricus knew well how tradition had depicted his home region. Since he was a native of the North, however, he also added his own perspective and his own tradition into his account. Perhaps the clearest example of this can be found in the introduction, where he quotes Hugh of Saint-Victor saying that the Northmen come from Scythia inferior, and Theodoricus says that he probably means Scythia superior, or what his own countrymen know as Suethiam (Sweden). Again we see the old conflation of these separate localities, and we see that even to the Norwegian Theodoricus this conflation is accepted. Similarly, in Chapter 12 Theodoricus speculates on the identification of Iceland with Thule, although he draws no conclusions.⁴³

Despite being from the North, Theodoricus is first of all a man of the church, committed to the apostolicity of the archbishopric. Consequently, in the *Historia* he employs the traditional stereotype of the Wild North, bolstered by references to old and new authorities, serving to emphasize the apostolic mission of the church, and also the role of Saint Olav as the one who brought Christianity to the North. Theodoricus's depiction of the Northmen as savage and wild are supported by references to the aforementioned Hugh, but also Sigebert of Gembloux's description 'aquilonaris gens atrocissima' (a most terrible northern people).⁴⁴ These references are found in the Prologue and serve explicitly to demonstrate that there have been deeds antedating his time that have gone unrecorded by native historians, but they also serve more implicitly to demonstrate the deplorable state of Norway prior to the arrival of Christianity.

This latter point is a recurring feature in the *Historia*. In Chapter 8, Theodoricus compares Olaf Tryggvasson as a positive counter example to Julian the Apostate. Furthermore, in Chapter 11 we learn of Olaf Tryggvasson's killing of the pagan priests, and Theodoricus comments that no hand except a strong hand could free the Norwegians from the bonds of devil-worship which was something they received 'cum lacte matris' (through the milk of their mothers).⁴⁵

Throughout the *Historia*, Theodoricus employs the classical North in various ways. In Chapter 17 this is seen especially clearly. Here Theodoricus talks about

⁴² Dalché, *Éléments d'origine chartraine*.

⁴³ Theodoricus Monachus, *Historia antiquitate*, pp. 19–21.

⁴⁴ Theodoricus Monachus, *Historia antiquitate*, pp. 3–4.

⁴⁵ Theodoricus Monachus, *Historia antiquitate*, pp. 18–19.

a whirlpool near the Orkneys which he identifies with Charybdis. By reference to Pliny the Elder, Chrysippus, Genesis, and Paulus Diaconus, Theodoricus brings together pre-Christian classical knowledge with Jewish and Christian accounts, all of which converge in the North.⁴⁶ Following this description of Charybdis and a brief section on the Longobards, Theodoricus provides a version of the Alexander legend where it was the Huns whom Alexander immured in the Maeotian Swamps. They are portrayed as beasts, cut in their cheeks so that they can learn pain while receiving milk from their mothers.⁴⁷ There are two points to emphasize here: first, Theodoricus here separates Scythia from the Maeotian Swamps unlike classical tradition and also unlike Adam, who identifies the Baltic Sea with the Maeotian Swamps; second, by juxtaposing the upbringing of the Huns and the Norwegians through the phrase ‘cum lacte matris’, Theodoricus links the beastly Huns with the pre-Christian Norwegians. This link becomes especially strong when we consider that the account of the Huns immediately precedes the account of Olaf Haraldsson’s return to Norway.

Compared with *Historia Norwegie*, Adam of Bremen, Pliny, and Solinus, Theodoricus is not concerned with the North as a place of wild races and strange animals. Rather, his preoccupation lies with the beastliness of humans who have not turned to the faith of Christ, a shortcoming which the Norwegians share with the Huns. As we saw, Olaf Tryggvasson tried to rectify this, but in the end it was Saint Olaf Haraldsson who brought the faith to the North.

When Theodoricus was writing, his patron Eystein was in the process of strengthening the cult of Olaf. This can be seen in the term ‘Olauus perpetuus rex Norwegie’ (Olaf the eternal king of Norway), a phrase found in a letter of privilege by King Magnus Erlingsson (1161–88).⁴⁸ As the letter was most likely drawn up by Archbishop Eystein, we see the attempt to make the secular power subject to the Church by way of the cult of Olaf. Since Theodoricus must have been heavily invested in this cult and the archiepiscopal politics — writing history is almost always political in the Middle Ages — it is clear that Theodoricus’s vision of the North is seen through the lens of Olaf as an apostle (though Theodoricus doesn’t employ the term ‘apostle’).

In *Historia antiquitate*, Saint Olaf’s narrative begins with an account of his baptism in Chapter 13, and continues in Chapters 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. Interspersed throughout this narrative — sometimes occupying entire chapters

⁴⁶ Theodoricus Monachus, *Historia antiquitate*, pp. 31–32.

⁴⁷ Theodoricus Monachus, *Historia antiquitate*, p. 33.

⁴⁸ Mortensen, ‘Introduction’, p. 14.

— are digressions drawing on classical and Christian tradition. These digressions become frames within the narrative of Saint Olaf and might be understood as connecting his story with the greater salvific narrative of Christianity. We might also see the same intention in Theodoricus's comparison of Olaf with Constantine the Great (Chapter 13) and in the comment that Olaf had been elected king by his soldiers, in the ancient manner of the Romans (Chapter 15).

In Theodoricus's account of Saint Olaf, the contrast of his Christianity with the paganism of the Norwegians is of great importance. We already saw the description of the pagan priests in Theodoricus's narrative of Olaf Tryggvasson. In Chapter 19, describing the death of Olaf, Theodoricus eulogizes over the martyred king and in addition to the more commonplace portrayals of the enemies as blinded and evil, there is also added a more specific description of the king:

[V]ir iste natus pæne in ultimis partibus aquilonis inter barbarous et uncultos. Videte quale sidus emicuerit, quam humilis, quam sublimis, et hoc non in servili conditione, sed in regali fastigio.⁴⁹

(This man was born nearly in the furthest reaches of the north among barbarians and uncultivated men. Behold you how he shone forth like a star, how humble, how sublime, and not from a mean condition, but from the highest point of royalty.)

Theodoricus then makes a passing reference to miracles performed by God through Olaf, and then he compares Olaf with Stephen Protomartyr.

In *Historia antiquitate* we thus see a commingling of the classical and the biblical North. The classical influence can be exemplified by the identification of Sweden with Scythia. As for the biblical north, however, the presence is less clear, since Theodoricus does not employ the typical biblical iconography to describe the northern reaches. However, the biblical North is nonetheless present, though more in a New Testament form than one drawing on the Old Testament prophets. As we have seen, the pagans of the North are described as devil-worshippers, and Olaf Haraldsson is the martyr who brings the faith into his country after the failure of Olaf Tryggvasson. Through the comparison with Stephen Protomartyr, the salvific dimensions of Theodoricus's narrative are made explicit.

⁴⁹ Theodoricus Monachus, *Historia antiquitate*, p. 40.

Passio Olavi

The work known as *Passio et Miraculi Olavi* is the saint-biographical account of the life, death, and miracles of Olaf Haraldsson. Due to its biographical focus, there is relatively little material touching on the geographical north. The only case is an account of a fishing expedition to the arctic seas, where fishermen were aided by the intercession of Saint Olaf. In this episode, the faithfulness of the Christian Norwegians is contrasted with the paganism of the Samis or Finns who also were fishing there. The pagans wanted to join in this by having their own gods included as addressees for the invocation, but the Christians refused, and the pagans caught no fish because Christ and Belial are not in agreement.⁵⁰

For the authors of the *Passio Olavi*, the geographical, contemporary North was of little concern. The biblical North, however, was of great importance. Some of this importance we have already seen in Theodoricus's account of Saint Olaf, but since Theodoricus was writing a history rather than a saint's *vita*, the biblical typology is not employed extensively. This typology surfaces very clearly in the *Passio*'s brief account of Olaf's life and death.

The *Passio* opens with a presentation of Norway as a big country situated northward. During the reign of Olaf Haraldsson, the writer states, '[i]ngressi sunt terram pedes euangelizantium pace, euangelizantium bona' (there entered into the land the feet of those who preached peace, who preached the good).⁵¹ The writer goes on, saying that '[h]actenus sacreligis idolorum mancipata ritibus et superstitiosis erroribus delusæ' (up to that point, it [the land] had surrendered to the sacrilegious rites of idols and deceived by superstitious error).⁵² Some people listened, but many declined the faith and this was because they, living close to the furthest north, were frozen by 'tenaciori glacie infidelitatis astrinxerat' (the tenacious ice of unbelief).⁵³ This was the same North from whence all evil would break forth in the prophecy of Jeremiah and where Lucifer planned to build his throne according to Isaiah.⁵⁴ But in the text, the Lord builds his city at the foot of the North — possibly an allusion to Nidaros — and let the mild southern wind of the faith soften the hardness of the North, and mollify the souls of a savage people. This characterization of the Norwegians is

⁵⁰ *Passio et miracula beati Olavi*, ed. by Jirousková, p. 72.

⁵¹ *Passio et miracula beati Olavi*, ed. by Jirousková, p. 15.

⁵² *Passio et miracula beati Olavi*, ed. by Jirousková, p. 15.

⁵³ *Passio et miracula beati Olavi*, ed. by Jirousková, pp. 15–16.

⁵⁴ *Passio et miracula beati Olavi*, ed. by Jirousková, p. 16.

picked up again later where the king's conversion of his people is described, and here the Norwegians are called a vicious, perverse nation.⁵⁵

The identification with the Arctic as the biblical North has immense consequences for the narrative of Saint Olaf, as it pits the missionary effort of the saint against the archetypal evil of the devil and elevates the narrative to biblical proportions. This furthermore aggrandizes the cult of Saint Olaf and of course the house of his relics, and ensures that Norway's place in the salvific history is one of great importance, having done battle with the forces of evil. This image of Olaf is strengthened by the account of his baptism and the description of his character, also by way of biblical reference. It is stated that when Olaf was baptized 'mutatus est in virum alium' (he was changed into another man), which comes from 1 Samuel 10. 6 and describes Saul, the first king of Israel.⁵⁶ Then we read that Olaf was buried together with Christ through his baptism, which draws on Paul's epistle to the Romans (6. 4), and a few lines later, the author says that Olaf 'apostoli vice fungens' (took up the lot of an apostle).⁵⁷ In this way, Olaf becomes both the archetypal beginner of a new royal, secular line, and at the same time imitating Christ. We might see in this an ideal union of secular and ecclesiastical power in which the sword of the church was the strongest, an ideal held dear by reformists such as Archbishop Eystein.

Although *Passio Olavi* is the shortest of the Latin history works of Norway treated here, it is also the most important one, because it was the official formulation of Norway's patron saint and provided the foundation for liturgical texts and homilies. The purpose of the *Passio* is in part to connect Norway to the salvation history of Christendom, and in this purpose we see the extent to which the authors and compilers of the text employed a biblical typology to enhance the role of the protagonist and thus of their own church.

The North and the Northerners

As we saw in the works of Abbo and Adam, neither of them northerners, the inhabited regions of the north were understood largely in terms of traditions established through the Bible and through classical historians, and in these traditions, the North was a distant, savage, strange, evil place most of the time.

⁵⁵ *Passio et miracula beati Olavi*, ed. by Jirousková, p. 19.

⁵⁶ This sentiment is also found in the office for Thomas Becket, *Studens livor*, albeit with a slightly different formulation, namely, 'est in virum alium / subito mutatus'. See Slocum, *Liturgies in Honour of Thomas Becket*, p. 170.

⁵⁷ *Passio et miracula beati Olavi*, ed. by Jirousková, pp. 17–18.

Thus, these mostly mythical places were inhabited with weird creatures and humanoids, some of the ferocious. As the classical and biblical heritage spread into the mindset of an expanding Christendom, the iconography of these traditions was conflated with geographical locations of a new cultural sphere. In this process, the biblical North and the classical North were moved from the Roman hinterland of the Caspian and Russian steppes to Scandinavia. In this process, Scythia became identified with Sweden, Dacia with Denmark, and the Riphean Mountains came to mark the border between Norway and the Finns.

In the three main works of the Norwegian history writing of the twelfth century, we see for the first time how the natives of this North were establishing themselves as part of two venerable traditions. As should be expected, perhaps, we see that in this establishment the two old traditions are given somewhat more nuanced details. In *Historia Norwegie*, we are given further details regarding the nature of the paganism practised in the Far North, while the catalogue of animals presented in this book is void of the marvellous touch of Adam's description of the northern fauna.

Perhaps the most important nuance found in the Norwegian description of the North can be seen in *Passio Olavi*, where the biblical north of Jeremiah and Isaiah, the *aquilo*, is not identified with the homeland of the Norwegians. Instead, the authors of the *Passio Olavi* state that the Norway is 'versus aquilonem allocata' (situated towards the north). Such a reading makes even more sense when compared to the account of the Danes in Abbo's *Passio Eadmundi*, where their northern land is directly compared with the place where Lucifer sought to place his seat to challenge God.⁵⁸ Granted, we should be careful in relying too much on such a comparison, since the two texts are centuries apart. However, since both Abbo and the Norwegian writers rely on the same biblical iconography, the difference in presentation should not be regarded as insignificant.

The three main works of Latin historical writing from twelfth-century Norway can in various ways be seen to rely on both the biblical and the classical traditions in their treatment of the North. But we also see that the information and interpretation of these traditions are heavily modified both by closer proximity to and experience with the actual, geographical north, and by the cult of Saint Olaf in Nidaros, which necessitates a more home-grown spin, as it were, on the traditional biblical iconography. Thus, I argue that the North of twelfth-century Norway becomes both less fantastical when seen in light of the classical tradition represented by Adam but at the same time more sinister as

⁵⁸ Abbo, *Passio Eadmundi*, p. 71.

the biblical interpretation of North is enhanced by depictions of pagan magic and idolatry, found respectively in *Historia Norwegie* and *Historia antiquitate*. However, in this employment of the two major traditions, Norwegian Latin writers also distinguished between the North they themselves inhabited where Christianity had already taken a foothold, and the pagan North where devil worship still prevailed. This is seen, as stated, in the situating of the ultimate North, *aquilo*, at the northern border of Norway, as seen in *Passio Olavi*. This North was a somewhat disputed terrain in the twelfth century, and although both worldly and religious Norwegian power sought to extend their control to it, it was clear that it still belonged to the paganism of the Sami and therefore became a biblical North.

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COLD CHARACTERS: NORTHERN TEMPERAMENT IN THE PREMODERN IMAGINARY

Virginia Langum

There is nothing particularly premodern about associating climate with character or disposition. After the identification of seasonal affective disorder in the 1980s, scientists correlate mood changes to the absence of light in winter months.¹ Other studies tie more specific kinds of behaviour to specific climates, such as violence to heat.² Most recently, a new study predicts a startling increase in violent crimes related to global warming.³ Indeed, throughout past millennia, attempts to link temperament and temperature form a persistent ‘moral climatology’.⁴

¹ Partonen and Magnusson, *Season Affective Disorder*.

² Some of these studies reflect or confront common cultural assumptions. For example, in response to common assumptions that higher temperatures lead to more violence in the American South, one influential study, *Culture of Honor*, rejects this climatic theory, while advancing another materialistic theory: that cortisol and testosterone levels are elevated in Southerners when provoked far beyond that of their Northern peers. See Nisbett and Cohen, *Culture of Honor*, pp. 3, 22, 82–84. See also Van de Vliert and others, ‘Temperature, Cultural Masculinity, and Domestic Political Violence’.

³ Ranson, ‘Crime, Weather and Climate Change’. The study garnered a lot of criticism, leading researchers to evaluate similar studies for flaws. The resulting working paper published by the National Bureau of Economic Research deemed fifty-six of these studies correlating climate change and violence valid. Burke, Hsiang, and Miguel and others, ‘Climate and Conflict’.

⁴ Livingstone, ‘Race, Space and Moral Climatology’. Examples in this volume of linking

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In ancient thought, medical and naturalistic theories of airs, waters, and places attributed particular physiologies to particular climates.⁵ Temperature, humidity, and other geographical factors were thought to influence the balance of the four humours, or the major four bodily fluids: choler, blood, phlegm, and melancholia. This balance correlated to physical, moral, and intellectual traits.⁶ Such climate theory occurs in texts from ancient Greece well into eighteenth-century Europe.⁷

While scholarship has discussed climate theory at length in relation to early modern thought and literature, it is patchier in regards to medieval thought.⁸ Medieval authors are deemed repetitive and derivative of their Greek and Arabic sources *or* they are skipped over altogether in chronological accounts ranging from ancient Greece to early modern Europe.⁹ However, several recent contributions to medieval studies have emphasized climate theory — or ‘geohumoralism’ — as a significant lens through which medieval thought understood differences between groups of people, arguing that climate theory contributes to proto-racialist thought.¹⁰ There is a robust debate about whether race and racism are productive categories through which to consider medieval thought.¹¹ The debate centres upon how medieval thought understood differences between groups, whether difference is an essential, material, biological matter, or whether difference is more culturally conceived, with groups bounded by language, law, conventions, and customs.¹² Climate theory,

climate and temperament/behaviour in early modern literature include de Angelo, ‘Making Saami of the Scots’, and Ballester Rodríguez, ‘Unknown and Barbarian’.

⁵ Glacken offers a comprehensive account of the relationship between man and the natural environment in the history of thought in *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*.

⁶ Langum, *Medicine and the Seven Deadly Sins*.

⁷ Beller, ‘Climate’.

⁸ Some early modern studies include Floyd-Wilson, ‘Temperature, Temperance, and Racial Difference’, Wands, ‘The Theory of Climate’, and Tooley, ‘Bodin and the Medieval Theory of Climate’.

⁹ Hogden, *Early Anthropology*; Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, p. 255; Zacharasiewicz, ‘The Theory of Climate and the North’; Beller, ‘Climate’.

¹⁰ The term has been used by both early modern and medieval scholars to describe the same phenomenon. See Floyd-Wilson and Sullivan, *Environment and Embodiment in Early Modern England*, p. 5; MacInnes, ‘Altering a Race of Jades’; Cohen, ‘Race’, pp. 118, 121.

¹¹ See Heng’s ‘The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I’ and ‘The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages II’.

¹² For the former theory, see Cohen, ‘On Saracen Enjoyment’, pp. 115–18; for the latter

which offers a material explanation for perceived essential differences, is critical to this discussion.

While there is not space to adequately explore the category and concept of race in premodernity, this essay explores how vital climate theory is to pre-modern discussions of 'northernness'. Is northern character innate? A focus on England is a useful lens for gauging conceptions of northernness. Described in more detail below, traditional climate theory disparages extreme climates, both northern and southern. Thus, English writers may have had a distinct interest in responding to such claims about northern character either by distancing England from negative descriptors of the 'northern character' and the North itself or by reformulating and reassigning northern physiology. In what follows, I briefly sketch the ancient and medieval context for climate theory before examining how key encyclopaedic and historical works from the early modern and late medieval periods describe northernness and how they map England in relation to northernness. While it might seem counterintuitive to move from early modern back to medieval, the strong climatic tenor of the early modern context writing illuminates the differences and absences of argument in the later medieval texts. I provide Modern English translations throughout, which are my own unless otherwise indicated in the footnotes.

Temperature and Temperament in Ancient and Medieval Thought

According to ancient medicine, climate affected complexion, which referred to the internal balance of the elements cold, hot, wet, and dry. The human body exhibited external markers of internal complexion such as skin colour and porosity, hair thickness, and fleshiness. The balance of elements also affected what we might describe as 'temperament' — outlook, character, and disposition to act and think in certain ways — however, temperament referred not only to behavioural nature but also to physiology.

While geography and climate strongly impacted the behaviour and character of groups, there were other contributing factors. The Hippocratic *Airs, Waters, Places* and other texts in this tradition argue that law can artificially counteract nature, for example.¹³ Furthermore, some physiological and char-

theory, see Bartlett, 'Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages', which examines how hair 'was used to mark status, ethnic identity, age and sex' (p. 44).

¹³ Isaac, 'Racism', p. 40.

acter traits have cultural causes. For example, the northern Scythians are more likely to be sterile from their long periods of horseback riding.¹⁴

Later Arabic thinkers and commentators, such as Avicenna (d. 1037) and Haly Abbas (d. 994), also provided medical explanations corresponding to accepted geo-climatic differences between peoples. The cold and dry southerners were intelligent but weak, and the hot and wet northerners were stupid and strong. External heat drew moisture out of the body, opening the pores and causing the body to lose both internal heat and moisture in the process. Likewise, external cold prompted the body to close the pores, trapping internal heat and moisture in the body. The moderate temperature of the middle zone between north and south facilitated the ideal, moderate temperament of its inhabitants.

As it had done for other areas of natural philosophy, the translation and transmission of Arabic and Greek texts beginning in the twelfth century also spurred interest in the relation between climate and disposition. In the Middle Ages and early modern period, climate theory provided a framework not only for explaining the differences between people but also for determining the best way to govern. Such is the rationale for *De regno* (On Kingship) by Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) that confirms ideas of northern insufficiency based on physiological grounds. Drawing from the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata*, Aquinas claims that northerners are stupid and blood-thirsty owing to their 'largo sanguine redundantes' (ample flow of blood).¹⁵

The German Dominican Albert the Great, or Albertus Magnus (d. 1280), offers a more extensive treatment of climate theory. His *De natura locorum* (On the Nature of Places) attributes material implications of climate upon human bodies and characters. Following tradition, Albert divides the whole the world into seven climes correlating to the seven planets. The first and seventh climes are the most extreme, the coldest and hottest respectively, the second and sixth are slightly less so but close to the first and seventh, and the fourth and fifth are most temperate and healthy.

Like many of his contemporaries and future commentators on climate, Albertus adopts the term 'Scythian' to describe northern peoples in both Asia and Europe. Albertus held with ancient ideas about the heat of northern bodies in the higher climes and the cold of southern bodies in the lower climes facilitating unsavoury character traits whereas the temperate middle climes

¹⁴ Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, p. 86.

¹⁵ Aquinas, *De regno ad regem*, II.2.

supported more temperate characters. For example, he writes, that northern customs are 'wolfish on account of the heat in their hearts' whereas southerners are 'light-hearted'. Those in between 'easily cultivate justice, keep their word, embrace peace, and love the society of men'.¹⁶ Furthermore, he describes the northern disposition to impetuosity and lack of discretion, citing the same ancient Roman text as Aquinas.

How essentialist were these climatic traits in medieval medicine? Was nature intractable? Medieval physiognomic texts distinguish between natural complexion, subject to change based on a change in environmental and other accidental factors, and radical complexion as the innate complexion of a person. Yet this innate complexion also could be altered. Ideal complexions were, furthermore, relative to particular climates. A healthy complexion in a southern climate could lead to disease and death in a northern climate and vice versa. Humoral balance adapted to new climates and thus their markers also altered. Even skin colour could change.¹⁷ Accordingly, Albertus is not deterministic in his climate theory. Rather, he suggests that the composition of the body might alter within a few generations of moving to another climate and region. He not only describes how plants and animals become smaller or larger when they are moved to another climate, but also conjectures that if Ethiopians were to relocate, within a few generations, their skin would be fairer.¹⁸

England and Northernness in Early Modern Thought

While Aquinas and Albertus write broadly about climates in terms of cardinal directions, other texts provide a more precise geographical span of populations. A focus on one particular land and people — England and the English — and their relationship to northernness reveals how significantly writers from the early modern and medieval period conceived of and integrated climate theory. Historically, England was marginalized in geographical writings in the ancient world, in the words of one scholar, 'a global other'.¹⁹ Not only was England geographically separate from the continent, but in Greco-Roman tradition, it was considered to have a climate on the margins, *oikoumene* (uninhabitable).²⁰ In

¹⁶ Tilman, *An Appraisal of the Geographical Works of Albertus Magnus*, p. 105.

¹⁷ Ziegler, 'Physiognomy, Science and Proto-Racism, 1200–1500', pp. 193–95.

¹⁸ See Bartlett, 'Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity', p. 47.

¹⁹ Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World*, p. 3.

²⁰ Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World*, p. 60.

his commentaries on Sacrobosco's *De sphaera mundi* (1271), Robert Anglicus summarizes: 'the last clime ends [...] hardly across the English channel, so that almost all England is outside a clime'.²¹ So England's status as Northern is somewhat debatable, a position that could be exploited by writers depending on their perspectives and desired position to the North.

Likely influenced by the expansion and colonization of European states in the sixteenth century, texts relating to national difference and geography greatly multiplied in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Early modern writers inherited thought regarding northern temperament from those ancient and medieval authorities cited previously as well as from newly translated ancient texts.²² Here I examine two historical works in relation to the theme of northern character and England as a background to compare medieval texts on England and northern character: *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (*Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, hereafter *Method*) by the French Jean Bodin (d. 1596) and the compilation of texts by various authors but often associated with Raphael Holinshed (d. 1580) *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*.

Following Aristotle and Aquinas, Bodin argues that in order to determine the best systems of governance, an understanding of the natural differences between peoples is necessary. Furthermore, he also deemed such knowledge critical to evaluate historical events. Within the context of his widely distributed and read *Method*, the temperate zone includes Bodin's own homeland, France, as well as Italy, Upper Germany, and parts of Spain. Among the closest Southerners are the Sicilians, Arabs, Cretians, Moors, and other Spaniards. The North is divided in to the extreme north of northern Scandinavia, to which Bodin does not devote much commentary, and the nearer north of Denmark, Lower Germany, England, and Scotland.²³ His climate theory reflects that of the ancients, with cold climates ensuring 'igitur vis interni caloris' (the strength of inward heat) of those who live in northern lands, thus making them 'vegetiores ac robustiores sint Australibus' (more active and robust than the southerners).²⁴ This biological drive explains the historical narrative of empires tending to

²¹ Quoted in Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere*, p. 271 n. 57.

²² These texts often included and responded to newly translated classical texts, such as Caesar's *Commentaries* and Tacitus's *Agricola* and *Germania*, which concerned the expansion of Rome into northern Europe. See Feerick, 'A "Nation...Now Degenerate"', p. 35.

²³ *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History* (hereafter *Method*), ed. by Reynolds, p. 96.

²⁴ Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem*, p. 86. English from *Method*, p. 92.

spread southward and seldom northward, as well as the English victory over the French and, in turn, Scottish victories over the English.²⁵ Within geographical gradations there are obvious physiological and psychological gradations, an increasing internal warmth from France to England to Scotland which impacts the course of history.

Bodin seeks humoral explanations for behaviour at every opportunity, even for those which the ancients did not. For example, where Caesar wrote that Germans are tall and strong because they 'animi libertate fruenterur, nec honestis disciplinis am puero imbuerentur' (enjoy liberty of will and are not shaped by a liberal education from boyhood), Bodin insists that 'cum tamen id calori & humori tribuendum sit' (their growth really ought to be attributed to heat and humour).²⁶ *Method* particularly focuses on the northern predilection towards drunkenness and its biological basis. Where Tacitus observed northern drinking habits, he omitted the natural causes.²⁷ Bodin explains that the natural heat of the Northerners creates a great appetite for wet and cold, quenched in their drinks.²⁸ So strong is the physiological urge to drink that it 'vllis vnquam temporibus aust legibus potuit emendari' (can never be changed at any time or by any laws).²⁹

Biology also explains northern barbarism. Throughout history, tyrants have long employed Northerners as bodyguards due to their strength and lack of 'cunning and malice', qualities Bodin associates with civilization. The farther one is from human culture, that is, from the nature of men, the nearer he approaches to the likeness of beasts, which since they are lacking in reason, are unable to restrain their wrath and appetites. So it happens that the Northerners are carried by impulse into acts of cruelty.³⁰ Yet Bodin insists that the Southerners are actually 'multo crudeliores' (much more cruel) than Northerners.³¹ Owing to their physiological dispositions, the quality of their anger is different than that of the Northerners. The hot, choleric Northerners are prone to short passionate outbursts whereas the cold, melancholic Southerners are prone to simmering, premeditated acts of revenge.³²

²⁵ *Method*, p. 93.

²⁶ Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitonem*, p. 87. English from *Method*, p. 94.

²⁷ *Method*, p. 95.

²⁸ *Method*, p. 94.

²⁹ Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitonem*, p. 87. English from *Method*, p. 94.

³⁰ *Method*, p. 99.

³¹ Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitonem*, p. 93. English from *Method*, p. 101.

³² See Langum, 'Sacred and Secular Wrath', pp. 27–34.

Given these strong natural compulsions, are Northerners culpable for certain vices, such as drinking, at all? In Bodin's conception, northern and southern dispositions represent two poles: the body and the soul. The greater strength of the northern body means that their intellects are weaker, impacting their free will and ability to modify their actions against the pulls of nature: 'ab inopia rationis & confilii Septentrionales appetitum cohibere nequeunt, ac prepterea intemperantas' (from want of reasoning and wisdom Northerners cannot control their appetites).³³ Where the strength of the body is greater than that of the soul, the soul cannot be expected to can dominate. Thus whereas, Southerners are culpable for drunkenness, Northerners are not, as they 'se cohibere non facile possint, cum vrgeantur ab interior calore & ingenij viribus deserantur' (cannot easily restrain themselves even if they wished, for they are impelled by internal warmth and lack the resources of genius).³⁴

Likewise, Bodin argues Northerners are not to be praised for their continence as his ancient sources did. While more fertile, Northerners are not inclined to lust as are Southerners, 'quod tamen continentia tribui nullo mollo potest, cum antea docuerimus Septentrionales suapte natura intemperatissimos esse in poru, cibo, ira, alea, rapinis' (yet this can in no way be attributed to self-control, since we have already shown that the northerners, by their own nature, are most intemperate in drinking, food, wrath, gaming, and stealing).³⁵ There is no virtue where there is no temptation. He adds, presumably referring to northern prowess, 'vt nemo fortis dici possit, nulo proposito periculo vel labore' (no one can be said to be brave when no danger or toil has been confronted).³⁶

Despite the heavy materialism of the text, Bodin ultimately attempts to assert the transcendence of free will over climatic dispositions. First, there is the possibility of mingling and migration. Of the first, the impact of fusion of peoples changes both external and internal markers. Bodin points to the increasing physical homogeneity as one travels further from the temperate zone in either direction, owing to the great number of peoples moving towards the temperate area. As for character development, he lists a few examples of how Northerners — Danes, Saxons, and English — integrated their bravery into the more southern Britons while they themselves became more kind.³⁷ The quality

³³ Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitonem*, p. 93. English from *Method*, p. 101.

³⁴ Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitonem*, p. 118. English from *Method*, p. 128.

³⁵ Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitonem*, p. 97. English from *Method*, p. 105.

³⁶ Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitonem*, p. 97. English from *Method*, p. 105.

³⁷ *Method*, p. 144.

of this change is left unexplained — whether it is a sociocultural shift or a more constitutional change. Given the previous discussion and comparison of people to plants who ‘quickly lose their identity and adapt themselves to the nature of the soil whence they take their nourishment’, we can assume that Bodin refers to a more physiological change. This is reinforced by his brief discussion of ‘training’ as a distinct category by which peoples can change. However, both these possibilities — mixing and training — are dwarfed by the prolific evidence Bodin presents for how physiological determinants shape the characters of people in particular geographical regions.

Bodin was incredibly influential and popular in England.³⁸ How did these barbaric Northerners respond to such descriptions of themselves? A text involving the work of several authors and compilation of older authorities, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* responds to ancient and contemporary critiques of the North, particularly England, both by reconfiguring the location of the North *and* revising the conception of the North. I cite from the 1587 version of the text.³⁹

Chronicles relocates the North to Scotland, displacing negative associations of the North away from the English and onto the Scots, ‘a people mixed of the Scithian and Spanish blood’ and appropriately the ‘most Scithian-like and barbarous nation’ of the British Isles.⁴⁰ Traits associated with northernness, such as gluttony, are also deflected onto the Scots. The Scots far exceed the English in ‘distemperate gormandiz(ing)’.⁴¹ *Chronicles* also emphatically distances the ‘wild Irish’ and their customs from the English, adding that the inhabitants of the English pale in Ireland.⁴²

Furthermore, *Chronicles* argues against tarring the English with certain stereotypes of Northerners, such as inferior intelligence. Or, as the text characterizes the argument of ‘the foreign historiographers’, ‘because we dwell northward, we are commonly taken [...] to be men of great strength and little policy’, meaning that their brains are not as heated by ample exposure to the sun. *Chronicles* argues, however, that the days are quite long in England compared to the rest of North. Indeed, England is even more temperate than

³⁸ Dean, ‘Bodin’s “Methodus” in England before 1625’ traces to references to Bodin by English authors from its publication until the first quarter of the seventeenth century.

³⁹ Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (hereafter *Chronicles*).

⁴⁰ *Chronicles* 1.4.

⁴¹ *Chronicles* 3.6.

⁴² *Chronicles* 1.8.

France in the summer.⁴³ *Chronicles*' response to traditional climate theory in general and to Bodin in particular is clear. Bodin's *Method* is cited directly in the text numerous times.

Yet for the compilers of *Chronicles*, it was clearly not enough to refute the climatological theories behind the maligning of the English. Instead, the text develops a conceit that explains the degeneration of the English through luxury imports, an early argument against the effects of globalization on local health. The text claims that 'north Britons' are getting fat from southern European imports. Despite being 'indued with an excellent nature', the northern body cannot cope with the introduction of foreign foods. Given that these foreign imports cause sicknesses and vices, *Chronicles* advocates a return to old mores and sensibilities, which are supported and sustained by the climate.⁴⁴

From these two texts, *Method* and *Chronicles*, we take a sense of a carefully delineated North. This is important due to the negative character traits associated with each region and their intractability. The English-produced *Chronicles* directly responds and refutes claims against the English, suggesting the extent to which these ideas were taken seriously.

England and Northernness in Medieval Texts

How do medieval texts present England and Englishness in relation to the North and northernness? For their extensive descriptions of many countries, including England, two works are particularly instructive: *De proprietatibus rerum* (On the Properties of Things) of Bartholomaeus Anglicus (d. 1272) and the *Polychronicon* of Ranulf Higden (d. 1364). Translated into several vernacular languages, *On the Properties of Things* was rendered into English by Trevisa in 1398. There are at least eight manuscripts of this translation.⁴⁵ *Polychronicon* was written in the early fourteenth century by the English Benedictine Ranulf Higden and survives in over 120 manuscripts belonging to religious houses, institutions, and private laypeople.⁴⁶ *Polychronicon* was also translated in the later fourteenth century into Middle English by John Trevisa and by another anonymous author in the fifteenth century. There are at least 14 manuscript copies of Trevisa's translation, which was also printed in the early modern peri-

⁴³ *Chronicles* 1.17.

⁴⁴ *Chronicles* 3.6.

⁴⁵ Edwards, 'The Text of John Trevisa's Translation', p. 85.

⁴⁶ Brown, 'Higden's Britain', p. 105.

od.⁴⁷ Both *On the Properties of Things* and *Polychronicon* originate with ostensibly English authors. While debatable how ‘English’ Bartholomaeus was in his own mind, Higden’s project claims certain national motivations as a ‘treatise gathered of diverse books, of the state of the island of Britain for the knowledge of men who come after us.’⁴⁸ While its scope is global, the emphasis is upon England and the imagined audience is clearly English; Higden and his Middle English translators employ the second person.⁴⁹

Both *On the Properties of Things* and *Polychronicon* offer prodigious attempts to synthesize vast stores of knowledge from ancient and medieval authorities: in the case of *On the Properties of Things*, knowledge about the natural and supernatural world; and in the case of *Polychronicon*, a universal history of the world up until the author’s own present time. Both texts contain extensive sections of geography. *On the Properties of Things* offers brief descriptions of the geography, customs, animals, plants, and inhabitants of nearly two hundred lands, ranging from Asia to Zeugia. Likewise, *Polychronicon* also offers an extensive discussion of the divisions of the world, bodies of water, as well as the countries of Africa, Asia, and Europe in the first book.

Modern commentators cite *On the Properties of Things* to make various claims about medieval thought on climate and geographical essentialism. Where one study praises the text’s descriptions of the Germans and Scots as ‘landmarks in the history of anthropological thought’, elsewhere it disparages stock phrases in describing the physical appearance and character of other groups.⁵⁰ Such stereotypes include the repetitive choice of adjectives such as ‘seemly’ to describe bodies, ‘steadfast hearts’ to describe characters and so on ‘invok(ing) repeatedly with the compulsive monotony of the conventional phraseology derived from the old humoral psychology and astrological ethnology’.⁵¹ More recently, a critic argues that these descriptions deliberately sort peoples into their appropriate climate-based groups, creating a binary between European and African, North and South.⁵² The text’s discussion of Europe outlines this binary and is often cited in arguments about racial thought in medieval culture:

⁴⁷ Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World*, p. 72.

⁴⁸ Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. by Babington, I, 6–9.

⁴⁹ Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World*, p. 72.

⁵⁰ Hogden, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, p. 63.

⁵¹ Hogden, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, p. 63.

⁵² Akbari, ‘From Due East to True North’.

3if þis partie of þe worlde (Europe) be lesse þan Asia, 3itte is it pere þerto in nombre and noblete of men, for as Plius seiþe, he fedep men þat ben more huge in bodie, more stronge in my3te and vertue, more bolde of herte, more faire and semeliche of shappe, þanne men of the cuntres and londes of Asia oþer Africa. For þe sonne abideþ [longe] ou[er] þe Affers, men of Affrica, and brennen and wasten humours and maken [ham] short of body, blacke of face, with criske here. And for spirities passe oute atte pores þat ben open, so þey be more cowardes of herte. And the cuntr[ary]e is of men of þe norþe londe: for coldenes þat is withoute stoppeþ þe pores and breedeþ humours of þe bodye makeþ men more ful and huge; and coolde þat [is] modir of whitenesse makeþ hem [þe] more white in face and [in] skynne, and vapoures and spirities ben ysmyten inwarde and maken hatter withinne and so the more bolde and hardy. An þe men of Asia ben meneliche disposed in þat.⁵³

(If this part of the world (Europe) is less than Asia, yet it is peer thereto in number and nobility of men, for as Plius says, he feeds men who are larger in body, stronger in might and virtue, more bold of heart, more fair and seemly of shape, than men of the countries and lands of Asia or of Africa. For the sun abides long over the Affers, men of Africa, and burns and wastes humours and makes them short of body, black of face, with crisp hair. And for spirits pass out at the pores which are open, so they are more cowardly of heart. And the contrary is of men of the north land: for coldness that is without stops the pores and breeds humours of the body which make men fuller and larger; and cold that is mother of whiteness makes them more white in the face and the skin, and vapours and spirits are smitten inward and make them hotter within and so the more bold and hearty. And the men of Asia are meanly disposed in that.)

The passage follows conventional medical theory about the hot and cold complexions, and its positioning of Asia as geographically and physiologically temperate.⁵⁴ One scholar has read his description of Asian character as 'pejorative' in the reference to the people being 'meneliche disposed' (meanly disposed) in Middle English.⁵⁵ However, both 'meneliche' and the original Latin 'mediocriter' likely meant 'moderately'. Then, the context would suggest a humoral balance between the cold qualities of the Africans and the hot qualities of the Europeans.

While this passage clearly seems to equate positive qualities with white skin and negative qualities with black skin, this division is not consistent. Elsewhere, in the discussion of the elements, *On the Properties of Things* describes the characters of people in cold lands which breed 'white men, as among the Slavs':

⁵³ Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour and others, II, 753.

⁵⁴ Biller, 'Proto-Racial Thought in Medieval Science', p. 171.

⁵⁵ Akbari, 'From Due East to North', p. 24.

Also coolde is þe modir of whitnesse and of paleness, as hete is þe modir of blaknes and of rednes [...] in coolde londes þe modres of women ben disposed to conseiue suche children. Þerfore þey beren children wiþ whyte skynnes, þat haueþ longe, 3elew3, neissche, and streite here [...] in þe body þer coolde haþ þe maistrie þe colour is white, here is neissche and strei3t, hard wit and for3eteful, litil appetite, miche slepe, heuy goinge and slowe.⁵⁶

(Also cold in the mother of whiteness and paleness, as heat is the mother of blackness and of redness [...] in cold lands the wombs of the women are disposed to conceive such children. Therefore they bear children with white skins, who have long, yellow, soft and straight hair [...] in the body where cold has mastery the colour is white, the hair soft and straight, the wit dull and forgetful, little appetite, much sleep, heavy going and slow.)

The character of men living in cold lands is certainly more derogatory here, where white skin is associated with dull and forgetful wits, heavy and slow bodies, than in the passage cited relating to Europe and Africa.

At times, the character traits of particular peoples correlate to conventional descriptions of northern peoples; however, climate is rarely invoked, certainly not to same extent as the early modern *Method* or *Chronicles*. Where climate is mentioned in reference to particular lands and peoples, it does not relate to character. For example, in the lengthy description of Germany, the large stature and war-like nature of the population are consistent with ancient and conventional climate-based characters. However, the text does not mention the conventional negative characteristics, such as dull wits or rashness, and does not reference climate at all in relation to character.⁵⁷ Rather language and manners are passed on to the English through conquest and colonization.

However, notions of climate in these descriptions of particular lands at times contradict the conventional descriptions *On the Properties of Things* gives elsewhere. For example, the temperate climate of the Irish, which is not too hot or too cold, would by traditional climatic theory facilitate a temperate population. However, the Irish are described as wild and savage, warriors who drink the blood of the men they kill after washing their faces with it. The text describes their characters:

Men of Irlonde ben singulereliche ycloped and vnsemeliche arraiede and scarseli-che yfedde, ful hardy of herte, fers of chiere, angry of speche and sharpe, nopeles freehertede and fayre of speche and godelyche to here own nacioun, and namelyche

⁵⁶ Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour and others, I, 136.

⁵⁷ Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour and others, II, 732.

pilke men þat wonen in woodis, marries, and mounteyns. Þise men ben apayed with flesshe, appels, and fruyt for mete, and with mylke for drynke, and 3euen hem for to pleyes and to huntynge þan to worke and trauayle.⁵⁸

(Men of Ireland are uniquely clothed and unseemly arrayed and scarcely fed, full hardy of heart, fierce of cheer, angry and sharp of speech, nonetheless, free-hearted and fair of speech and good to their own country, and namely these men who dwell in the woods, marshes, and mountains. These men are content with flesh, apples and fruit for food, and with milk for drink, and are more given to play and to hunting than to work and travail.)

Here, *On the Properties of Things* describes a difference of character and behaviour between groups living in Ireland based on their geography; however, the cause is more dietetic than climatic.⁵⁹ This disjuncture between the temperateness of the Irish land and the intemperateness of the Irish people is taken from Gerald of Wales.⁶⁰ However unlike Gerald, *On the Properties of Things* does not apply this disjuncture to make England more central.

The Scots are depicted in similar terms; namely, because Scots had once settled in Ireland according to the text. However, 'bycause of medlynge with Englissh men many of hem han changed þe oolde maners of Scottes into bettir maners for þe more deele' (because of mixing with English men, many of them have changed the old manners of Scots into better manners for the most part).⁶¹ What does *On the Properties of Things* mean by 'mixing' or 'medlyng' as it is rendered in Trevisa's translation? It could mean either association or breed-

⁵⁸ Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour and others, II, 769.

⁵⁹ Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour and others, II, 769.

⁶⁰ Gerald writes that Ireland is 'the most temperate of all countries,' enjoying 'the freshness and mildness of spring almost all the year round' and meaning that 'the air is so healthy that there is no disease-bearing cloud, or pestilential vapour, or corrupting breeze'. Gerald of Wales, *History and Topography of Ireland*, p. 53. This temperate climate and lack of disease stands in utter contrast to the people described. However, Gerald shows social and cultural causes for the disjunction. 'But although they are fully endowed with natural gifts, their external characteristics of beard and dress, and internal cultivation of the mind, are so barbarous that they cannot be said to have any culture' (p. 101) He emphasizes their marginality as factoring into their barbarity: 'All their habits are the habits of barbarians. Since conventions are formed from living together in society, and since they are so removed in these distant parts from the ordinary world of men, as if they were in another world altogether and consequently from well-behaved and law-abiding people, they know only of the barbarous habits in which they were born and brought up, and embrace them as another nature. Their natural qualities are excellent. But almost everything acquired is deplorable' (pp. 102–03).

⁶¹ Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour and others, II, 812.

ing. Regardless, the possibility for the Scots to adapt emphasizes a learned, sociocultural force over essentialist, climatic theory.

Other northern lands and peoples, such as Norwegians, Saxons, and particularly Swedes, are praised for bravery and skill in battle. Although he overcame the French, Germans and Britons, Julius Caesar 'dredde to fyghte with Danes, Gootes, Norweyes, and opere men of þe northe' (dreaded to fight with Danes, Goths, Norwegians and other men of the north).⁶² Not all Northerners fare so well. The Slavs are described as 'fers and sharpe and vnsemelich, wiþoute deuocioun in Goddis seruice, and lede þe lyf of skymmours and see þeves' (fierce and sharp and unseemly, without devotion in God's service living the life of pirates).⁶³ However, in 'lesse Sclauia' (lesser Slavia) the people are 'stronge of body, erthe tilliers an fisshers, and more deuoute to Godde and peisible to ney3bores þanne þilke þat wonen in þe more Sclauia' (strong of body, farmers and fishers, and more devout to god and peaceful to neighbours than those who dwell in greater Slavia).⁶⁴ The distinction between the two groups of Slavs owes to the 'medlynge and companye þat þeu haue alle day with þe Germans' (mixing and company that they have all day with the Germans).⁶⁵ Although citing an ancient source here (Herodatus), it is surprising that *On the Properties of Things* does not make a reference to earlier physiological argument. After all, we recall, the Slavs were the quintessential 'white men' used to describe the influence of cold climates and cold physiologies. Instead, the text relies solely on socio-cultural influences upon character rather than climate theory. Although certainly prejudiced in favour of certain groups of people that might exercise a certain paternalistic benefit to other groups, the nature of this prejudice does not appeal to science, or at least, does not appeal to climate theory. Furthermore, far from carefully delineating what is north and what is south, what is east and what is west, *On the Properties of Things* rarely used cardinal directions as descriptors. Beyond general descriptions of northern and southern climate-based temperaments, there is little reference to climate in the text's descriptions of particular lands.

Given the particularly English context and motive behind the text, what is the role of climate in shaping character and specifically northern and English characters in *Polychronicon*? *Polychronicon* consists of seven books, the first of

⁶² Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour and others, II, 813.

⁶³ Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour and others, II, 806.

⁶⁴ Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour and others, II, 807.

⁶⁵ Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour and others, II, 807.

which concerns world geography with the bulk devoted to Britain. This geographical section was particularly popular as evidenced by its circulation independently from the rest of the text.⁶⁶

Although dividing the world traditionally in its traditional three parts — Asia, Europe and Africa — *Polychronicon* focuses on Europe and Africa in terms of climate and character. Africa and Europe were once thought to have been joined, but Africa was cut off like ‘a sore membre þat is nouȝt from membres at þat beep hole’ (a sore limb from whole members) due to its ‘yuel doers, corrupte ayre, wyld bestes and venomous woneþ þerynne’ (evil doers, corrupt air, wild and venomous beasts).⁶⁷ Furthermore, the text draws upon the familiar climatic logic that the boldness and heartiness characteristic to Northerners results from the external cold trapping the heat within. Although ‘all þat lyueth and groweþ may better endure wiþ colde þan wiþ hete; bote mesure rule boþe’ (all who live and grow may better endure with cold than with heat, but measure rules both), little attention is given to measure or its implied geography and climate, presumably Asia. Instead Europe is shown to produce ‘men huger and gretter of body, myztier of strengþe, hardier and bolder of herte, and fairer of schap, þan men of Affrica’ (men larger and greater of body, mightier of strength, hardier and bolder of heart and fairer of shape than Africa).⁶⁸ The hot sun in Africa affects the body in similar ways to those described previously, drawing out the humours and causing cowardice. In contrast are ‘norþeren men, in þe whiche colde wiþ oute stoppeþ smale holes and poorus, and holdeþ the hete wiþ wyne; and so makeþ hem fatter, gretter, and whitter and hatter with inne, and so hardier and boldere of herte’ (northern men in which the cold outside blocks small holes and pores and holds the heat within, and so makes them fatter, greater, and whiter and hotter within, and so hardier and bolder of heart).⁶⁹ General statements about climate and character are sprinkled throughout the text. For example, ‘by þe dyuersite of heuene is dyuersite of colours of face, of quantite and gretnes of body, of maneres and of witt; þerfore in Rome beþ heuy men, yn Grees lyȝt, in Affrica gileful, in Gallia witty men and wyse’ (by the diversity of heaven is diversity of facial colours, of quantity and greatness of body, of manners and of wit; therefore, in Rome men are heavy; in Greece, light; in Africa, guileful; and in France, witty and wise).⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Brown, ‘Higden’s Britain’, p. 106.

⁶⁷ Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. by Babington, I, 51.

⁶⁸ Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. by Babington, I, 51–52.

⁶⁹ Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. by Babington, I, 53.

⁷⁰ Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. by Babington, I, 267. This statement is repeated in abbreviated form, p. 295.

However, beyond these general statements of physiological superiority over the Africans, how does Higden express the relationship of climate specifically to the character of people of England and in other northern lands? There is one particularly important example of the impact of climate on history. Speaking of Germany, *Polychronicon* explains that being far from the sun, the northern lands are healthy and enable reproduction easily much more than in southern lands.⁷¹ This ease of reproduction means, however, that Germany produces more children than it can sustain. The text uses this physiological knowledge to establish why people from this part of the world conquer other lands. There are very few other references to how the northern climate shapes attendant physiology and character. Comparing them to the snow melting on their native Alps, the text relates that the French are hasty and strong at first then their courage begins to falter with the heat of the sun or once they break out in a sweat.⁷² Also, the Flemish character is attributed to two causes: mixing with the French and the climate which makes them 'stronge of body, faire of face, bold of herte, and fel of witte' (strong of body, fair of face, bold of heart and treacherous of wit).⁷³ However, the invocation of climate here seems opportunistic. No reference to a climatically degraded wit occurs in descriptions of other northern peoples much more northerly than Flanders.

In describing northern character formation, the text more often points to mixing with other groups. The text lists positive qualities of Danes familiar to those of other northern peoples: 'beep faire of stature and semeliche of face and of here. And þou3 þey be sterne azenst here enemyes, þey beep to gode men and trewe boþe esy and mylde' (are of elegant stature, having attractive face and hair. And although they are stern against their enemies, they are easily and mild to good and true men). However, the text continues: 'but þat may not be forȝete, þat þey brouȝte grete drynkynge into Engeland' (let it not be forgotten that they brought excessive drinking to England).⁷⁴ Where early modern texts clearly explain excessive northern drinking habits as part of their physiological impulse, here it is clearly a custom that is transmitted by exposure to other groups.

⁷¹ Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. by Babington, I, 255.

⁷² Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. by Babington, I, 269. This sentiment is not unique to *Polychronicon*. Albert the Great writes that 'the French, who want to do wondrous things at the beginning and in the end accomplish nothing, and people like this are called *hardi* (bold) in French'; cited in Resnick, *Marks of Distinction*, p. 308.

⁷³ Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. by Babington, I, p. 295.

⁷⁴ Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. by Babington, I, 323.

Like Gerald of Wales, the text both includes the healthiness and temperateness of the Irish climate and the barbarity of the people. However, the contrast is not made explicitly in *Polychronicon* as it is in Gerald of Wales. Negative aspects of their character — sloth and idleness, bad manners, failure to tithe or lawfully wed, variability, treachery, and so on — are rather given a socio-cultural rather than climatic causality. Indeed, ‘aliens and men of straunge londes þat woneþ longe among hem draweþ aftir þe manere of hir companye’ (men of foreign lands who dwell long among them take after the manner of their company), meaning that they fall into ‘schrewednesse and bycomeþ traytours’ (shrewdness and become traitors).⁷⁵ The Irish have also influenced the Scots in terms of their ‘in her byleue, in cloþinges, in langage, in speche, in wepene, and in maneres’ (beliefs, clothing, in language, in speech, in weapons, and in manners) through intermarriage.⁷⁶

Yet the initial Irish influence on the Scottish temperament has been mitigated by ‘mixing’ with the English: ‘Scottes beþ lyzt of herte, strange and wyld i-now, but by mellynge of Englisch men þey beþ moche amended’ (Scots are light of heart, strange and wild’ yet ‘by mixing with English men they are much amended’).⁷⁷ Trevisa’s Middle English translation uses ‘mellynge’ and the Latin ‘admixtione’. Rather than conceived as a matter of climatically determined essentialism, northern characters seem adaptable through cultural osmosis. Likewise, group behaviour adapts to changes in financial circumstance. For example, the text remarks that the Welsh now behave more like English men than in the past. They are more peaceful, because they now have more to lose by starting conflicts.⁷⁸

While the English are compared favourably to the Scots and the Irish as they are in early modern descriptions, their difference is not essential. Furthermore, Higden’s division of his own country, while allowing diversity of character by geographical division does not invoke climate either:

Men of þe souþ beþ easier and more mylde; and men of þe north be more vnstable, more cruel, and more vnesy; þe myddel men beþ somdele partyners wiþ boþe: also þey woneþ hem to glotonye more þan oþer men, and beþ more costlewe in mete

⁷⁵ Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. by Babington, I, 357–59.

⁷⁶ Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. by Babington, I, 385.

⁷⁷ Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. by Babington, I, 387–89.

⁷⁸ Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. by Babington, I, 411.

and in drynke and in clopynge. Me troweþ þat þey took þat vyce of kynge Hardek-
nute þat was a Dane.⁷⁹

(The people of the south are more meek and quiet, the people of the north are more inconstant and cruel, the people of the middle parts share these qualities. Also the people of England are given more to gluttony and excess before other people, expending much money in meat and clothes. I believe that they took that vice from King Hardenknute who was a Dane).

While these conventional characteristics are in early modern texts attributed to climate and medical essentialism, Trevisa and Higden do not make these connections here. Furthermore, the reference to King Hardenknute's legacy suggests an entirely different way that behaviour and character is transmitted.

Unlike the early modern texts, in the medieval encyclopaedic texts we find less interest in geographical boundaries and their climatic implications. It is unclear where North begins and ends in either *De proprietatibus rerum* or *Polychronicon*, what North includes and excludes. Rather the discourse of 'north' exists more commonly in other English texts within the blend of the biblical reference to Lucifer sitting in the North and traditional northern European legends of the mythical goddess Hel who lived in the North. For example, in *Piers Plowman*, Lucifer takes residence in the North, and in *Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain makes a pilgrimage northward to battle a green giant. Sermons sometimes also position hell in the North. For example, in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 241, the faithful are urged to focus the eyes of the soul north to hell, east to heaven, west to the start of life, and south to the end of life (fol. 85^v). Such a view of the North is more consistent with the tales of the fabulous seen elsewhere in the volume. Within medieval English culture, the North is still a land apart, 'strange and wild', less medically than mythically conceived. England, too, is a land apart. However, it is unclear where and wither England and North merge.

⁷⁹ Higden, *Polychronicon*, ed. by Babington, II, 167.

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NORTHERN SEAS, MARINE MONSTERS, AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE PREMODERN NORTH ATLANTIC IN THE LONGUE DURÉE

Vicki Szabo

‘Í Íslands höfum þykki mér fátt þat vera, er minningar sé vert eða umræðu, fyrir utan hvali þá, er þar eru í höfum.’

(Aside from the whales in the ocean, there are[...] but few things in the Icelandic waters which are worth mentioning or discussing)¹

A remarkable constant emerges when considering premodern historical and literary depictions of ‘the North’, writ large both geographically and temporally. The North, as shown in most of the essays in this volume, is a foreign other, sometimes beatific, sometimes terrifying, but it is almost always defined as a terrestrial space. Premodern depictions of Northern Europe, from classical to late medieval accounts, often reveal vast, dangerous, and wild seas as characteristic of a uniquely wild North. The North Atlantic, North, Baltic, and Norwegian seas, and adjacent Arctic waters boasted violent storms, sailing challenges, and monstrous sea creatures rarely seen in southern waters, all of which amplified the foreignness and wildness of the classical and medieval ‘North’ in non-native accounts. Both the seas themselves and the monsters within them typified the challenges faced by travellers to the North, but not always in equal

¹ *The King’s Mirror*, trans. by Larson, chap. 12. Larson’s version of *The King’s Mirror* is the standard translation, but it does not provide the original Old Norse. Original language quotation is taken from *Speculum regale. Konungs-skuggsjá*, ed. Keyser and others.

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measure. One cannot speak of the premodern European North without invoking the impact of the oceans.²

The northern oceans represented the literal edge of Europe, but also the liminal boundary of civilized human existence. Even when classical explorers found some barbaric form of proto-civilization in the northern climes, the oceans themselves remained impenetrable: 'People on land think of the sea as a void, an emptiness haunted by mythological hazards. The sea marks the end of things.'³ While the medieval European 'North' itself was a conceptual challenge, the waters of the North and glimpses of monstrous marine inhabitants were the stuff of nightmares.⁴ The darkness and depth of the outer Ocean and northern waters were the symbolic emphasis of the differences between civilized South and barbarous North; no wonder some Arabic visitors simply called the outer Ocean the 'Sea of Darkness'.⁵ The premodern authors who wrote of mysterious northern seas were at the vanguard of modern observations that oceans present humans with the greatest and least well known frontiers for exploration.⁶

The sea has contributed to the conceptual wildness of the 'North' throughout history, but few historians have explored how the sea itself was an actor in premodernity. The common adage that the oceans and seas were highways in the premodern world reinforces the concept that waters merely link lands, where history really happens. The ocean did connect people via travel, exploration, commerce, faith, military exploits, and politics, but its role in history was more than just a means of passage or a foreign adjunct to the land. The sea is both featureless and dominating, essential to premodern life, but also presenting an impossible challenge and danger.

John Gillis has argued that seas and shores have shaped human civilization, and yet historians, routinely looking inward, are firmly terracentric and landlocked in their perspective: 'We all suffer from a crippling amnesia, forgetting that coasts are very special places[...] where two ecosystems overlap

² Walczowski and others, 'Changes in Atlantic Water Properties'.

³ Jonathan Raban, *Coasting* (1987), quoted in Mack, *The Sea*, p. 13.

⁴ Marine mammals, we think, typically spend perhaps 20 per cent of their lives on or under the surface of the waters; ancient oceans must have bubbled with all manner of creatures glimpsed and disappearing.

⁵ Dunlop, 'The British Isles according to Medieval Arabic Authors', p. 18. Medieval Arab writers labelling the Atlantic as 'Sea of Darkness' include Al-Masúdi in *Muruj adh-Dhahab* and Ash-Sharif al-Idrisi in *Nuzhat al-Mushtaq*.

⁶ See Etzioni's 'Final Frontier vs. Fruitful Frontier'. According to NOAA, only 5 per cent of the oceans have been explored; we know more about the surface of the moon than the ocean depths.

[...]. Humanity's current relationship to the shore is that of the stranger, for after millennia of coastal existence, it has forgotten how to live with coasts and oceans'.⁷ Put plainly, the 'ocean has a history [...]. This history determines the ocean's present state and shapes its path into the future. We cannot understand how the ocean functions today without knowing its ecological history'.⁸ Humans and oceans have a long, symbiotic relationship of intertwining and overlapping histories.

This contribution to the current volume asks readers to reconsider how oceans and seas functioned as defining features of premodern European 'Northernness'.⁹ The medieval northern oceans are dynamic and commanding, interplaying with the land in surprising ways, but one cannot examine the bustling northern oceans without a simultaneous focus on sea monsters, archetypes of wildness, emblematic of forbidding waters, and symbolic in their own way of the terrors of the North. Unlike the 'objective, fixed, and measurable surface' of a landscape, the oceans and seas that bordered northern lands were anything but stable and sensible.¹⁰ A 'quintessential wilderness, a void without community', the oceans in fact teemed with animals and unearthly noises of winds, water, waves and ice, and the animation of the oceans did not escape notice of premodern authors.¹¹

The ocean, with its anthropomorphized moods, brought fear and challenges to those who traversed it, even more so when it issued forth its monstrous creatures upon the thin and constantly shifting littoral zone of the shore. This is where the sea enters history, where unearthly whales and monsters washed ashore for all to see, and where the North's difference and legendary maritime monstrosity were best witnessed. In some texts, as will be seen, the oceans become little more than a matrix for monsters, and oceans themselves disappear as obstacles or actors. But these monsters were less monolithic than the seas that held them; monsters migrated across maps as the oceans themselves held geographically steady. As Norsemen moved across the North Atlantic

⁷ Gillis, *The Human Shore*, pp. 3–4.

⁸ Lotze and others, 'Uncovering the Ocean's Past', p. 137.

⁹ Barbara Auger's contribution in this volume also argues that the maritime landscape and its associated lexicon was key in Norman identity.

¹⁰ Hastrup, 'Icelandic Topography', p. 53. Each author in the present volume, of course, will define 'north' in disparate and equally sensible ways; for the purpose of this article, sources are drawn largely from Norway, Sweden, Iceland, and Denmark. Additional sources referring to Scotland and Greenland will also be used.

¹¹ Mack, *The Sea*, 17.

world, establishing a successful array of settlements across the North Atlantic diaspora, their own definitions of what constituted the 'North' shifted with them and around them, as did monsters in the seas.

Many of the texts presented here come from authors whose works scaffold upon one another. The sea creatures of the *Konungs Skuggsjá*, or the *King's Mirror*, for example, serve as fodder for later texts by Olaus Magnus, Adriaen Coenen, and Jón laerði Guðmundsson.¹² Each of these authors is known, at least in part, for dramatic accounts or illustrations of the monsters of northern seas. A survey of northern waters and whales from antiquity to the seventeenth century, *une petite longue durée*, underscores changing perceptions of where the 'North' begins and how oceans and animals helped define that unique space.

Transdisciplinary Approaches to the North Atlantic and Ocean History

Overlooking the ocean as a subject of environmental history is not merely a premodern problem. Because the ocean is seen as timeless and unchanging, it transcends historical approaches.¹³ Historian Jeffrey Bolster in 2008 wrote that the 'living ocean's role in history remains shrouded in fog [...]. The interactions of human maritime communities with the marine biological communities on which they depended seem to have remained largely un-investigated because of the enduring assumption that the ocean exists outside of history'.¹⁴ In his 2013 *The Sea and Civilization*, Lincoln Paine issues a bold challenge to readers: 'I want to change the way you see the world [...] by focusing your attention on the blues that shade 70 percent of the image before you, and letting the earth tones fade'.¹⁵ Such an exercise affords us the opportunity to explore the

¹² These authors, to the exclusion of many other important voices on monstrous creatures of medieval waters, have been selected for unique views of northern seas in particular. While useful works including Orosius, Isidore, Albertus Magnus, Ortelius, and others would contribute to a more complete view of medieval perceptions of whales and whale use, this survey is more focused on the relations of monstrous whales and creatures to northern waters.

¹³ 'The ocean's ecological history [...] was ever changeable so that our baseline for comparison depends on when we choose to measure it. Over time the baseline may have shifted due to natural variability, human impacts, or a combination of the two': Lotze et al., 'Uncovering the Ocean's Past', p. 137.

¹⁴ Bolster, 'Putting the Ocean in Atlantic History', p. 23; see also Bolster, *The Mortal Sea*; Cunliffe, *Europe between the Oceans*; Jackson, Alexander, and Sala, *Shifting Baselines*; Mack, *The Sea*; Rick and Erlandson, *Human Impacts on Ancient Marine Ecosystems*.

¹⁵ Paine, *The Sea and Civilization*, p. 3.

North and especially the North Atlantic from a new perspective. Historians like Bolster, Gillis, and Paine have tried to combat the terracentricity that has defined much of global history.¹⁶ Traditional historians, one could argue, suffer from an 'inability to regard place as anything but terrestrial'.¹⁷ In other words, medieval oceans are portrayed as the superficial surface upon which historical actors perform, but the oceans themselves play no part in history.

Ancient authors and audiences acknowledged and marvelled at the unknown reaches of the marine world.¹⁸ Their recorded observations about the changes, perceived or actual, within the maritime world are an important form of data that should not be dismissed simply because of its reliance upon monstrous tropes. Using ancient and medieval sources as early proxy accounts of climate change and ocean change offers both benefits and challenges.¹⁹ There seems to be no better case study than the North Atlantic to consider

¹⁶ See also Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean*, and Paine, *The Sea and Civilization*.

¹⁷ Eric Leed, 'The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism', cited in Gillis, *The Human Shore*, p. 7; see also Gillis, *Islands of the Mind*.

¹⁸ For the Atlantic world, and especially the North Atlantic world, numerous factors and processes must be taken into account when trying to conceive of past marine conditions and how those conditions would have affected life, settlement, and travel across Subarctic and North Atlantic Europe. Palaeo-oceanography and marine historical ecology offer a different array of challenges and proxy data than palaeoclimatology and terrestrial historical ecology. This exercise, though, is well worth the effort expended as we turn to an array of sources that are not just folk studies of whales and oceans, but proxy data for a critical era in European environmental history.

¹⁹ The most notable form of historical proxy data used in premodern whaling studies, for example, are eighteenth- to twentieth-century whale ship logbooks. Logbooks have long served as invaluable sources of data for the era of industrial whaling, and even before, but their precision, even their value, is debatable. Not only do these sources tell legions of stories about the sailors, whalers, animals, and environment, they provide us with data on whales taken, whales struck, and whales lost, serving as an important reference point in consideration of past and present cetacean populations. Recently, historians and biologists alike have questioned the validity of these logbooks as sources of reliable data, particularly with respect to historical marine mammal populations and species identifications. The History of Marine Animal Populations (HMAP), part of the Census of Marine Life (2000) project, has effectively used logbooks to contribute both to species abundance studies and mapping of historical populations. Biologists, geneticists, and cetacean specialists, though, have used an array of alternative techniques, looking at species' genetic diversities and bottlenecks, to reconsider the marine mammal populations of premodern, and preindustrial seas. See also Baker and Clapham, 'Modeling the Past and Future'; Jackson and others, 'How Few Whales Were There'; Reeves and Josephson, 'Near-Annihilation of a Species'; Roman and Palumbi, 'Whales before Whaling'.

approaches to holistic ocean histories, given especially that 'the Atlantic Ocean is a dominant presence in medieval history, but so vast that it is rarely considered an entity'.²⁰ Gillis calls the Atlantic the 'last of the oceans to be mastered but arguably the one that has had the greatest influence over time'.²¹ Further, no North Atlantic culture would seem more pertinent to an oceanic history than the northernmost of the Europeans, the Norse, called the most 'amphibious' of all early Atlantic cultures, and the 'Lords of the Ocean'.²² In looking at accounts of the premodern European North through the lens of maritime history, and in seeing the oceans as a primary means of cultural and conceptual connectivity, we may reconceive of the North Atlantic and Subarctic worlds as significant bioregions, united by maritime traditions that may disappear in terracentric histories. We might consider the changing accounts of monstrous whales in northern seas both as metaphorical indicators of northern wildness but also as evidence for shifting climates across the breadth of the Middle Ages, particularly within sensitive maritime ecosystems.²³ Considering that marine biologists consider marine mammals, particularly cetaceans, to be 'ecosystem sentinels', this new form of proxy data may shed light on climate change in the medieval North.²⁴

²⁰ Hudson, 'Prologue', p. 1.

²¹ Gillis, *The Human Shore*, p. 57.

²² Gillis, *The Human Shore*, p. 57; Hudson, 'Prologue', p. 9.

²³ The popular concepts of the Medieval Warm Period, also called the Medieval Climate Anomaly, circa CE 900 to 1300, and the Little Ice Age, circa CE 1300 to 1800, are increasingly considered to be problematically expansive, imprecise indicators of smaller phases of climate fluctuation. While most historians, archaeologists, and scientists would acknowledge that climate fluctuations impacted medieval life, tracking more nuanced phases of climate change requires more geographically sensitive sources of proxy data, particularly for northern and marine environments, where climate fluctuations may be felt more immediately. For current discussions, see Bradley, Wanner, and Diaz, 'The Medieval Quiet Period'; Büntgen and Hellmann, 'The Little Ice Age'; Kelly and Ó Gráda, 'Debating the Little Ice Age'; Mann and others, 'Global Signatures and Dynamical Origins'; McCormick and others, 'Climate Change during and after the Roman Empire'; Young and others, 'Glacier maxima in Baffin Bay'.

²⁴ Alter and others, 'Climate Impacts on Transocean Dispersal'; Higdon and Ferguson, 'Loss of Arctic Sea Ice'; Kovacs and Lydersen, 'Climate Change Impacts on Seals and Whales'; Moore, 'Marine Mammals as Ecosystem Sentinels'; Poloczanska and others, 'Responses of Marine Organisms'.

Classical and Early Accounts of Northern Seas

To list the classical authors who recount stories from or travel upon northern seas would be lengthy and redundant.²⁵ To name just a few, Aristotle, Herodotus, Pytheas, Caesar, Strabo, Pliny, Tacitus, Lucian, and Juvenal share common, and frequently derivative, perspectives on the oceans and the quasi-mythic islands and monsters to be found in those distant waters. Hudson writes that ‘the Greeks knew the Atlantic Ocean as an area of mystery littered with fantastic islands populated by incredible creatures. Romans were never really comfortable on it, although their military surveys were responsible for some of the most accurate information about it.’²⁶ The outer ocean, or Oceanus itself, was home to monstrous animals that lurked and frolicked, ready to charge at and scuttle ships that crossed their paths. The authors’ own calm sea, the Mediterranean, rarely boasted the sorts of monsters seen in the depths: ‘Large whales live in the outer oceans and fishes much larger than those in our inland sea,’ wrote Arrian in the second century.²⁷ Greek geographer Strabo of Amasya (54 BCE — CE 24), among others, noted several varieties of monstrous whales off the coast of Spain, including *ketos*, *balaenae*, the folk-species called ‘spouters’, but not the vast array of species that was found in the North. Pliny the Elder, in his late first-century *Natural History*, is perhaps most comprehensive in listing species of whales and marine creatures: ‘in tanto mari oceanoque quae nascuntur certa sunt, notioraque, quod miremur, quae profundo natura mersit’ (in the sea, vast though it is, and in the ocean, the number of animals produced is known; and — we may well wonder at this — we are better acquainted with the things which nature has sunk down in the deep).²⁸ His admiration for the ocean itself, though, seems more expansive: Pliny’s confidence in Roman knowledge of sea creatures may have held true for the Mediterranean, but not, it would seem, for the monster-riddled North.

Given the relative passivity of creatures within *Mare Nostrum*, classical authors looked with some wonder towards northern seas, not having travelled or set sight upon them, but having heard stories of the fury both of the oceans and their monstrous inhabitants. The northern oceans were so fierce to

²⁵ Many works offer comprehensive analyses of the voices of Greeks and Romans who tell these tales; for a recent treatment, see Hudson, ‘Prologue’, pp. 1–6.

²⁶ Hudson, ‘Prologue’, p. 1.

²⁷ Arrian, *Anabasi /Indica*, trans. by Robson, VIII, 29. 13–30, p. 395. See additionally Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*.

²⁸ Pliny, *Natural History*, trans. by Jones, XXXII, liii, p. 143.

Mediterranean travellers that they almost didn't resemble oceans or seas at all. In the North, according to Polybius and repeated by Strabo, the land, sea, and air were conceived of as almost inextricable: 'a sort of mixture of all three, of the consistency of a jelly-fish in which one can neither walk nor sail, holding everything together'.²⁹ The closer one travelled to Thule, the more sluggish and impenetrable the seas became. Tacitus in both *Agricola* and *Germania* (CE 98) described the northern sea as 'pigrum ac prope inmotum, quo cingi claudique terrarum orben hinc fides' (sluggish and almost motionless, with which the earth is girdled and bounded).³⁰ On attempts to reach Thule, the torpid sea prohibited real exploration: 'mare pigrum et grave remigantibus perhibent ne ventis quidem perinde attolli [...] et profunda moles continui maris taridus impellitur' (the sea was sluggish and heavy to the oar and comparatively torpid even to the wind [...] the deep mass of uninterrupted water is slower to be set in motion).³¹ The Romans' failed attempts to reach Thule 'typified the relationship between the civilized south and the inaccessible north'.³²

In the *Agricola*, Tacitus describes maritime travel in the northern seas as vexing to the Roman army:

naturam Oceani atque aestus neque quaerere huius operis est, ac multi rettulere: unum addiderim, nusquam latius dominari mare, multum fluminum huc atque illuc ferre, nec litore tenuis adlescere aut resorberi, sed influere penitus atque ambire, et iugis etiam ac montibus inseri velut in suo.

(Nowhere has the sea more potent influence: many tidal currents set in various directions; nor merely do the incoming tides wash the shores and ebb again, but penetrate the land deeply and invest it, and even steal into the heart of hills and mountains as though into their native element).³³

The sea was confounding for reasons beyond its winds and currents. He also wrote of shipwrecked Roman sailors from British seas: 'Ut quis ex longinquo revererat, miracula narrabant, vim turbinum et inauditas volucris, monstra maris, ambiguas hominum et beluarum formas, visa sive ex metu credita' (Not a man returned from the distance without his tale of marvels — furious whirl-

²⁹ Polybius, *Histories*, xxiv.

³⁰ Tacitus, *Agricola, Germania, Dialogus*, trans. by Hutton: *Germania* chap. 45; *Agricola* chap. 10.

³¹ Tacitus, *Agricola, Germania, Dialogus*, trans. by Hutton: *Agricola* chap. 10.

³² Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity*, p. 96.

³³ Tacitus, *Agricola, Germania, Dialogus*, trans. by Hutton: *Agricola* chap. 10.

winds, unheard-of birds, enigmatic shapes half-human and half-bestial: things seen, or things believed in a moment of terror).³⁴ Tacitus's description of monsters ends there, without elaboration; it is a simple declaration that an ocean so violent would naturally hold such creatures.

Late Antique and early medieval authors and texts, including St Ambrose, Isidore of Seville, St Brendan's *Navigatio*, Dicuil's *De Mensura*, and the popular *Physiologus* and Bestiary, passed down and elaborated upon classical traditions and creatures. Monstrous marine animals dotted the conceptual maps of traveling Romans and other Mediterranean people, but the Ocean itself was their preeminent terror. When we turn to the first northern authors to document monstrous marine creatures, the narratives shift ever so slightly in perspective. Here we find voices more familiar with the oceans and the monsters within.

Early Medieval Accounts: Ottar

Ottar, the self-proclaimed northernmost of Norwegians, offered no acknowledgement of the creatures that so flummoxed the Romans, not in British seas or even those of Norway.³⁵ Ottar's ninth-century voyage to the far north of Norway was recounted to the court of King Alfred of Wessex and preserved in an Old English translation of Orosius's *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*. This unique text purportedly comes to us from a maritime perspective, as Ottar recounts his journey as though he gazes upon the long Norwegian coast, noting the interplay of land and sea and including an 'abundance of genuine geographical details'.³⁶ This vision does not, however, include the monsters seen in classical accounts. The great age of medieval marine monsters wouldn't arrive until the thirteenth century. In fact, the animals which Ottar does mention are mundane, secondary to the force of the waters and winds of the northern reaches.

The history of Ottar is somewhat shadowy. His purpose at King Alfred's court, his home residence, the precise course of his travels, the stilted or abbreviated quality of his presentation all have vexed historians. Some have speculated that Ottar's unusual account is a series of responses to questions that were asked but were not preserved within the text itself. This would, Bately suggests, explain the text's clipped tone, and the lack of context for some infor-

³⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, II.24.

³⁵ Ottar is also known as Ohthere, an earlier Norwegian name variant.

³⁶ Makarov, 'The Land of the *Beormas*', p. 140.

mation provided: ‘What is quite clear is that on occasion imperfect or selective reporting by the original note-taker, or clumsy and selective paraphrasing by a subsequent drafter, has resulted in quite serious problems of communication.’³⁷ Englert maintains that Ottar’s account must have included answers to multiple questions about navigation, geography, trade, and other topics.³⁸ Ottar supposedly recounted to King Alfred’s court that his journeys north had purposes beyond the mercantile:

he æt sumum cirre wolde fandian hu longe þæt land norþryte læge, oþþe hwæðer ænig mon be norðan ðæm westenne bude. Ða for he norþryhte be þæm lande; let him ealne weg þæt weste land on ðæt steorbord & þa windsæ on ðæt bæcbord þrie dagas. Ða wæs he swa feor norþ swa þa hwælhuntan firrest faraþ. Ða for he þa giet norþryhte swa feor swa he meahte on þæm oþrum þrim dagum gesiglan. Ða beag þæt land þær eastryhte, oþþe seo sæ in on ðæt long, he nysse hwæðr

(He once wished to find out how far the land extended due north, and whether anyone lived to the north of the unpopulated area. He went due north along the coast, keeping the uninhabited land to starboard and the open sea to port continuously for three days. He was then as far north as the whale hunters go at their furthest. He then continued due north as far as he could reach in the second three days. There the land turned due east, or the sea penetrated the land he did not know which.)³⁹

After waiting for northerly winds, he sailed another four days, at which point he waited again, ‘for ðæm þæt land beag þær suþryhte, oþþe se sæ in on ðæt land, he nysse hwæþer’ (there the land turned due south, or the sea penetrated the land he did not know which).⁴⁰ As Ottar’s account concludes, he describes southern Norway to Alfred and his court, again noting that ‘Wið suðan þone Sciringes heal fylð swyðe mycel sæ up in on ðæt land, seo is bradre þonne ænig man ofer seon mæge, & is Gotland on oðre healfe ongean & siððan Sillende. Se sæ lið mænig hund mila up in on þæt land’ (to the south of *Sciringes heal* a great sea penetrates the land; it is too wide to see across. Jutland is on the far side and after that Sillende. This sea flows into the land for many hundred miles).⁴¹

³⁷ Bately, ‘Ohthere and Wulfstan’, p. 31.

³⁸ Englert, ‘Ohthere’s Voyages Seen from a Nautical Angle’, p. 117.

³⁹ *Two Voyagers*, ed. by Lund, p. 18. The precise voyage of Ottar, both in distance and duration, remains debated. See also Bately and Englert, *Ohthere’s Voyages*.

⁴⁰ *Two Voyagers*, ed. by Lund, p. 19.

⁴¹ *Two Voyagers*, ed. by Lund, p. 22.

Úthaf, Ocean, was omnipresent, as the forces of land and sea mingled in the north in ways unseen elsewhere.

Among the more notable moments in Ottar's account is his undetailed but impressive boast that he, within a team of hunters, killed a large pod of large whales in the span of two days, a feat held as impossible by many historians. Ottar reported to King Alfred that there was good walrus hunting in the north, but that: 'ac on his agnum lande is se betsta hwælhuntað: þa beoð eahta and feowertiges elna lange, & þa mæstan fiftiges elna lange; þara he sæde þæt he syxa sum ofsloge syxtig on twam dagum' (the best whale hunting is in his own country; those [whales] are forty-eight ells long, the biggest fifty ells long; of these he said that he, one of six, killed sixty in two days).⁴² Perhaps in Old Norse, and not the marine-challenged lexicon of Old English, Ottar would have a more impressive tale to tell. Old English renders Ottar's descriptions in black and white, his Norse maritime vocabulary enfeebled by two flimsy Old English words for whale — *bron* and *hwaæl*. Old Norse offered about twenty-six different terms for whale, some particular species, some poetic synonyms, but many representing unique types of whales or monsters.⁴³ Bately, like others, argues that the linguistic proximity of Old English and Old Norse should have 'provided no great difficulty' in communication, so Ottar's lack of description of the whales may be notable.⁴⁴

Whether due to translation or misunderstanding or neither, the whales described by Ottar were unimpressive in their absent monstrosity. Hailing from the north, perhaps Ottar, the pragmatic merchant, traveller, or chieftain, whatever his station in life, did not expect to see monsters in the seas which he frequented, especially those around his home, where so many later authors would note their presence. Meriting more extensive commentary from Ottar was the

⁴² *Two Voyagers*, ed. by Lund, p. 20. The Old Norse ell roughly equals eighteen inches, so the whales which Ottar claimed to have hunted were approximately seventy-five feet long. Some historians contend that the quarry must have been Right whales. See also Clark, 'Whales as an Economic Factor'.

⁴³ Fell, 'Some Questions of Language', p. 58.

⁴⁴ Bately, 'Ohthere and Wulfstan', pp. 29–30. The debates over the number and species of whales taken by Ottar underscore the confusion in his account: 'So it must be small whales or possibly walrus that Ohthere killed 60 of in two days, not the largest whales that the text as it stands seems to indicate, which presumably would only fall prey to the hunters if an individual or two became beached or stranded in shallow water. Ohthere may have been asked, first about the size of walrus, then about the location of the best whale hunting, then about the (maximum) size of whales in his own area, and finally about his best catch ever'; Bately, 'Ohthere and Wulfstan', p. 31.

geography of sea and land in the Far North. Throughout his account, he cannot tell whether the land intrudes upon the sea or, more likely, the sea, great force that it is, penetrates far inland. This is the region, though, where accounts ultimately will marry 'trustworthy geographical records [...] combined with mythological perceptions rooted in the medieval concept of the extreme North as a mysterious land occupied by fabulous monsters'.⁴⁵ Perhaps the truly monstrous creatures aren't found in northern waters until the eleventh century, when Adam of Bremen notes their existence, or even later. As the remainder of this survey will show, they would appear with increasing frequency, colour, and dynamism until the early seventeenth century, when Jón laerði pronounced them extinct.

Accounts from the Central Middle Ages

The medieval accounts of the anonymous *Historia Norwegie*, Adam of Bremen's *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, the *King's Mirror* from Norway, and the monstrous stories of Olaus Magnus recount a variety of tales about the powerful Ocean and equally powerful monstrous marine animals. As these accounts transition, though, from the central to the late Middle Ages, readers witness an amplification in the unique monstrosities attributed to northern sea creatures. One could easily dismiss this transformation as the product of high medieval authorial imagination. These new monsters in northern seas also could be accurate reflections of fluctuating ecologies and populations, as whales' migration routes and feeding patterns shifted with changing currents, oscillations, gyres, and climates.⁴⁶

A brief review of these sources shows us that authors' views remain terrestrial, unlike those of Ottar and the later Adriaen Coenen, whose comfort with coastal or maritime life may have shaped their perspectives and their narratives in unique ways. The seas remain terrifying, but the monsters have become the main attraction. Unquestionably the most impressive and memorable terrors of the sea, these monsters shift their geographies, moving further to the north or west as North Atlantic settlements are established, or as sailors more easily traversed the reportedly calmer seas of the High Middle Ages. Whereas monsters

⁴⁵ Makarov, 'The Land of the *Beormas*', p. 141.

⁴⁶ For more, see: Kleisner and others, 'The Effects of Sub-Regional Climate Velocity'; Molinos and others, 'Climate Velocity and the Future Global Redistribution'; Pinsky and others, 'Marine Taxa Track Local Climate Velocities'; Polyakov and others, 'Recent Oceanic Changes in the Arctic'.

once circled Britain and terrorized Norway's coast, by the twelfth century, they had moved to Iceland and Greenland and beyond. As local waters were domesticated, monsters seem to shift.

Historia Norwegie and Adam of Bremen

Nearly a millennium after Tacitus's account of northern seas, Adam of Bremen in his eleventh-century *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen), reiterated continued struggles in those waters as experienced by travellers in his own age.⁴⁷ Written within the context of recent conversions and ecclesiastical contests, Adam, perhaps working under the request of Archbishop Adalbert of Hamburg-Bremen, conveyed personal knowledge alongside well-known themes of northern history.⁴⁸ Book IV, *Descriptio insularum aquilonis*, offers his research and knowledge on the northern islands and seas. The British Ocean was, in Adam's words, of 'immensa, terribilis et periculosa' (immense breadth, terrible and dangerous).⁴⁹ Beyond Britain, into the farthest ocean past Denmark and Orkney and Iceland, the seas became an impenetrable and uniquely northern miasma. Adam reports on a group of Frisians who set sail for the northern seas only to encounter terrors. Upon passing Iceland, and calling upon God and Saint Willehad for aid,

subito collapsi sunt in illam tenebrosam rigentis oceani caliginem, quae vix oculis penetrari valeret. Et ecce instabilis oceani euripus ad initia quaedam fontis sui archana recurrens, infelices nautas iam desperatos, immo de morte sola cogitantes, vehementissimo impetu traxit ad chaos [hanc dicunt esse voraginem abyssi] illud profundum, in quo fama est omnes recursus maris, qui decrescere videntur, absorberi et denuo revomi, quod fluctuatio crescens dici solet.

(Suddenly, they fell into that numbing ocean's dark mist which could hardly be penetrated with the eyes. And behold, the current of the fluctuating ocean whirled back to its mysterious fountainhead and with most furious impetuosity drew the unhappy sailors, who in their despair now thought only of death, on to chaos; this they say is the abysmal chasm — that deep in which report has it all the back flow of the sea, which appears to decrease, is absorbed and in turn re-vomited, as the mountain fluctuation is usually described.)⁵⁰

⁴⁷ For a fuller discussion of Adam of Bremen and the *Historia Norwegie*, see Hope, 'The North in Latin History Writing of Twelfth-Century Norway', in this volume.

⁴⁸ Nyberg, 'Adam of Bremen', p. 1.

⁴⁹ Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, trans. by Tschan, bk IV, chap. 10.

⁵⁰ Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, trans. by Tschan, bk IV, chap. 39.

The north was filled with pirates, former and current barbarians and ignorant pagans who occupied the shores and islands of those wild seas.⁵¹ In the Baltic, or the Barbarian Sea, 'sunt et aliae in hoc ponto insulae plures, ferocibus barbaris omnes plenae, ideoque fugiuntur a navigantibus. Item circa haec ittora Baltici maris ferunt esse Amazonas' (there are also very many other islands, all infested by ferocious barbarians, and for this reason avoided by navigators. Likewise round the shore of the Baltic Sea, it is said, live the Amazons).⁵² Beyond Norway, nothing but horrors existed: 'Post Nortmanniam, quae est ultima aquilonis provintia, nichil invenies habitacionis humanae, nisi terribilem visu et infinitum oceanum, qui totum mundum amplectitur' (Beyond Norway, which is the farthestmost northern country, [where] you will find no human habitation, nothing but ocean, terrible to look upon, and limitless, encircling the whole world).⁵³ Beyond this beyond, though, lay Orkney and Thule, places where inhabitants 'frementis oceani ludibundae minas derident' (laugh playfully at the threats of a menacing ocean).⁵⁴

Within these wild northern lands and seas, Adam recognized the heightened reliance upon marine mammals by northern peoples, although he attributed the use and acquisition of whales in northern climes to supernatural barbarian magic:

Omnes [...] sunt christianissimi qui in Norvegia degunt, exceptis ilis qui trans arctoam plagam circa oceanum remoti sunt. Eos adhuc fertur magicis artibus sive incantationibus in tantum praevalere, [...] Tunc etiam potenti murmure verborum grandia cete maris in litora trahunt, et alia multa, quae de maleficis in scriptura leguntur, omnia ilis ex usu facilia sunt.

(All [...] who live in Norway are thoroughly Christian, except those who are removed beyond the arctic tract along the ocean. These people, it is said, are to this day so superior in the magic arts or incantations that they [...] draw great sea monsters to shore with a powerful mumbling of words and do much else of which one reads in the Scriptures about magicians.)⁵⁵

⁵¹ Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, trans. by Tschan, bk IV, chap. 12.

⁵² Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, trans. by Tschan, bk IV, chap. 19.

⁵³ Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, trans. by Tschan, bk IV, chap. 34.

⁵⁴ Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, trans. by Tschan, bk IV, chap. 34.

⁵⁵ Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, trans. by Tschan, bk IV, chap. 31. Norwegians and Icelanders themselves saw those who lived in the Scandinavian Arctic as potentially magical and dangerous, able to divert fish, harness the powers of nature, and harm those who seek the resources of the northern waters.

Other authors, like Olaus Magnus, also noted the association of the northern seas, its whales, and resources. We might imagine Adam or his contemporaries considering the rock art of Norway, Sweden, or Finland, depicting marine hunters landing fish or with occasional depictions of whales and other prey.⁵⁶ Perhaps his reference to the mumbling of words and magicians refers to the art of Sami shamans or rituals of hunting, passed down and maintained among coastal peoples. These were people whose conversion, perhaps, was pressing for Adam's reading audience; they also were likely heirs of old traditions of marine mammal exploitation as witnessed in archaeological evidence along Norway's Atlantic and Arctic coasts.⁵⁷

Oceanic terrors resurface in the anonymous *Historia Norwegie*, likely dating to the twelfth century. Nominally a history of the deeds of Norwegian kings, this text is better known for its 'early and unique geographical description of Norway and the North Sea realm as well as some ethnographic details, the highlight of which is the detailed account of a shamanistic séance among the Sami'.⁵⁸ As with Adam's account, upon which the *Historia* heavily relies, alongside other Latin texts, the foreignness of the North and its peoples are emphasized, along with their unnatural connection to the seas and monstrous creatures.

Norway, the author writes, is divided into three habitable zones, the largest of which was the seaboard: 'Circumsepta quidem ex occasu et aquilone refluendis Oceani' (To the west and north, Norway is enclosed by the Ocean tides).⁵⁹ This massive zone was subject to the terrors of both Ocean and its creatures: 'Ibi ille profundissimus Septentrionalis Sinus, qui Caribdim, Scillam et inevitabiles voragines in se continet' (Here to the north lie the very deep fjord

⁵⁶ Nigg, *Sea Monster*; see also Makarov, 'The Land of the Beormas'.

⁵⁷ Hundreds of small archaeological features called *bellegropen* are found along the coast of northern Norway, thought to be stone-lined seal, walrus, and whale blubber rendering pits. They 'have been found alone and in groups of up to 40 pits, where 3–6 pits seems to be normal. They have found pits with whale vertebrae inside, other sites have whale bone around'; see Hansen and Olsen, *Samens Historie*. See also Hoffecker, *A Prehistory of the North* and Henriksen, *Hellegropene*. Storli says the pits are found within the range of Ottar's voyage and are thought to concentrate in the same period as Ottar's travel, between the seventh and tenth centuries; see Storli, 'Othere and his World', pp. 92–93. Northern Norwegians, like other peoples of the European Arctic and Subarctic, had been hunter-fishers for millennia, and realistically conceived, as far as we can tell, of their maritime prey as great animals and resources, but not as monsters.

⁵⁸ *Historia Norwegie*, ed. by Ekrem, trans. Fisher, p. 8.

⁵⁹ *Historia Norwegie*, ed. by Ekrem, trans. Fisher, p. 53.

which encloses within itself Charybdis, Scylla and inescapable whirlpools).⁶⁰ As though the ice, waves, and creatures weren't terrible enough:

Ibi etiam cete grandia diuersi generis fortissimas naues confringentia, nautas diglutiunt, quosdam submergunt. Ibi equini ceti monoculi iubis diffusis profunda pelagi sulcantes ferocissimi reperiuntur. Illic pistrix, illic hafstrambus, maxima bellua, sed sine cauda et capite solum susum et iusum dissiliendo ueluti truncus, non nisi nautarum pericula prefiguret, apparet. Illic hafguua et haffkitta, pre cunctis marinis monstribus maxima, et cetera huiuscemodi infinita reperiuntur.

(Here live huge sea-beasts of various species, that will smash the stoutest vessels to smithereens and gulp down the crews; some of these they will drown. One-eyed, very ferocious walruses are to be found here, cutting furrows through the ocean depths, with manes fanning out. There, also, are the whale and the *hafstramb*, a gigantic creature but without tail or head, which merely springs upwards and downwards like a tree-trunk, and only appears in order to predict perils for sailors. There, too, one may discover the *hafguua* and the *haffkitta*, the very largest of marine monsters, and the countless others of their kind.)⁶¹

This narrative shows the first real inklings of the range of monsters to be found in the north; *hafguua*, *haffkitta*, and *hafstramb*, the ferocious walrus and *balena* are all unique in their behaviours. The *Historia* account goes further than previous sources in isolating species within this northern oceanic zone of Norway, and is more animated than what had come before, both in the names and actions of its smashing, gulping, and sailor-imperiling monsters.

Historia Norwegie begins the process of cataloguing the specific terrors within the seas, and therefore serves as something of a transitional text. While Ottar and Tacitus note marine mammals and monsters, the seas themselves were paramount in their terrors. In the works that follow the *Historia*, more extensive catalogues of whales are found, lists and illustrations in each work more numerous than in the last. Finally, the expansive and brutal sea is less the terror than the creatures within. Norwegian waters for the author of the *King's Mirror*, for example, are no longer remarkable, and the wonders have shifted to the north and the west, to Iceland and Greenland. And so the story seems to go thereafter: as long held coastlines were familiar and pacified, and the oceans themselves became less terrifying than the animals within. From the eleventh-century *Historia* to the thirteenth-century *King's Mirror*, we also transition into what is typically considered a more climatically placid

⁶⁰ *Historia Norwegie*, ed. by Ekrem, trans. Fisher, p. 57.

⁶¹ *Historia Norwegie*, ed. by Ekrem, trans. Fisher, p. 57.

era.⁶² With changes to sea ice, shifting warm and cold currents and food sources, a positive persistent North Atlantic Oscillation, and alterations to migration patterns, it is possible that new species of whales or other marine mammals could be found in those northern seas.⁶³

Cataloguing Monsters: *The King's Mirror* and Olaus Magnus's *Carta* and *Historia*

By the thirteenth century, sea monsters were flourishing. Classical sea monsters, like *Balena* and *Orca*, the Island whale, and the Kraken swam alongside new varieties of whales and monsters in northern waters.⁶⁴ These monsters are all seen in the remarkable thirteenth-century *King's Mirror*, written by a learned Norwegian author, possibly at the court of King Hákon Hákonarson.⁶⁵ The function of the work is debated, declared both a didactic and political work, perhaps written as Norwegian royal propaganda using the natural world as a metaphor for correct political order of the North Atlantic world.⁶⁶

The *King's Mirror* is presented as a dialogue between father and son, recounting roles of merchants, ecclesiasts, and princes, but also the wonders of the natural world, including twenty-one species of whales, very specific creatures with varied attributes, aggressions, and roles. Whether verisimilitude or humour, the father bemusedly reminds his son to 'ask no stupid questions', and the son, once granted permission to speak freely, turns to 'Írland eða Ísland eða Grænaland

⁶² Tracking climate change with precision across the North Atlantic during the Middle Ages remains a challenge for historians. For more, see also Ogilvie, 'Climate'; Ogilvie and Jónsson, 'Little Ice Age Research'; Ogilvie, Barlow, and Jennings, 'North Atlantic Climate c. AD 1000'.

⁶³ See Doney and others, 'Climate Change Impacts on Marine Ecosystems'; Lambert and others, 'Cetacean Range and Climate in the Eastern North Atlantic'; Nøttestad and others, 'Recent Changes in Distribution and Relative Abundance'; Saher and others, 'Sea-level Changes in Iceland'; Trouet and others, 'Persistent Positive North Atlantic Oscillation Mode'; Víkingsson and others, 'Distribution, Abundance, and Feeding Ecology'.

⁶⁴ Nigg's *Sea Monsters* catalogs the array of monstrous creatures that came to medieval maturity, while helpfully providing a comparison of monsters and modern species. Nigg's catalog of critters, including ancestral lore, map legacy, and development, forms the bulk of his book, found from pages 28–147. His illustrated 'Glossary of Sea Monster Counterparts' is not to be missed, pp. 152–53.

⁶⁵ Holm-Olsen, 'Konungs skuggsjá', pp. 366–67; see also Brégaint, 'Conquering Minds'; Bagge, *The Political Thought of the King's Mirror*.

⁶⁶ Brégaint, 'Conquering Minds', p. 440.

ok undr þau öll, er þar eru í, annathvárt um eld eða undarlig vötn, eða um kyn fiska eða um skrimsl, þau er þar vafra í höfum umhverfis' (Ireland, Iceland, and Greenland, and all the wonders of those lands, such as fire and strange bodies of water, or the various kinds of fish and monsters that dash about in the ocean).⁶⁷

As the son reminds the father a few chapters later, Norway was uninteresting, as the youth had seen it, done it, heard it, and been there: 'þessir hlutir eru mér allir kunnir, þviat þeir eru hér í landi, ok hefi ek alla séna' (I am familiar with all these things since they are found in our own country, and I have seen them all).⁶⁸ In this context, the father then teaches the son of the numerous whales of Iceland and Greenland.

Pragmatism laces the father's account in equal measure with scepticism. He is too aware of maritime industry and economy to give in wholly to frivolities found in later catalogues or accounts. This author and Ottar had much in common. Of the kraken, for example, the author has relatively little to say: 'þar kuanu ok fæstir frá hánnum nökkut at segja gōrla, þviat hann er flestum sjaldsénn [...] hvarki spyr ek, at hann hafi veiddr verit né dauðr fundinn' (There are, moreover, but very few who can tell anything definite about it, inasmuch as it is rarely seen by men [...] [I have not] heard that one has ever been caught or found dead).⁶⁹ Of the majority of species, both useful and dangerous, the author is lyrical and expansive, describing size, behaviour, utility, taste, even species protections and hunting prohibitions. The author is unperturbed and practical in tone, more like the oceanic huntsman Ottar than some of the cataloguing authors whose works follow, namely, Olaus Magnus. Waters have monsters, lands have marvels; the father in the *King's Mirror* states he is 'ek fúsastr at ræða um undr þau er hér eru norðr með oss' (not much disposed to discuss the wonders that exist among us here in the North), largely in fear of being accused of fabrication.⁷⁰

It is really only with Greenland, where the waters are 'infested with monsters', like mermen, mermaids, sea hedges, that the author's account becomes more unsettled. The waters of Iceland swim with whales, the waters of Norway

⁶⁷ *Konge-speilet*, ed. Keyser, Munch, and Unger, chap. 8. English translation from *The King's Mirror*, trans. by Larsen, p. 101.

⁶⁸ *Konge-speilet*, ed. Keyser, Munch, and Unger, chap. 10. English translation from *The King's Mirror*, trans. by Larsen, p. 105.

⁶⁹ *Konge-speilet*, ed. Keyser, Munch, and Unger, chap. 12. English translation from *The King's Mirror*, trans. by Larsen, p. 125.

⁷⁰ *Konge-speilet*, ed. Keyser, Munch, and Unger, chap. 8. English translation from *The King's Mirror*, trans. by Larsen, p. 101.

barely deserve mention, but Greenland — here the monsters work in tandem with the sea to cause havoc. The merman, recounted in stories but never closely observed, signals trouble: ‘Jafnan þegar etta skrimsl hefir sét verit, á hafa menn ok vitat visan storm i hafi eptir’ (Whenever the monsters has shown itself, men have always been sure that a storm would follow).⁷¹ The direction in which the merman dives dictates whether a ship will go down or be spared in the ‘stóra storma’ (severe storms).⁷² Mermaids offer more of the same, as does the terror of the ‘hafgerðingar’ (sea hedge), a monster that embodies the power of the sea itself: ‘en þat er því líkast sem allr hafstormr ok báru allar, þær sem í því hafi eru, samnisk saman i þrjá staði, ok gerask af því þrjár báru’ (it has the appearance as if all waves and tempests of the ocean have been collected into three heaps, out of which three billows are formed).⁷³ Son, finally impressed with the father’s tales, concludes ‘Svá skilsk mér ok, at þetta haf mun vera stormsa-mara en hvert annarra [...] ok þykkir mér undarligt, hví men girnask þangat svá mj ök at fara’ (Now I understand that this ocean must be more tempestuous than all other seas [...]. I am curious to know why men should be so eager to fare thither).⁷⁴ The *King’s Mirror* combines its most monstrous seas and creatures in a different northern context than that of Adam of Bremen before him, or of those impressive cataloguers who follow.

Three hundred years later, the northern waters were described by the most well-known of all premodern northern authors on whales, Olaus Magnus (1490–1557). The lavishly illustrated *Carta marina et descriptio septemtrionalium terrarum ac mirabilium* (Nautical Chart and Description of the Northern Lands and Wonders) (1539) and the later *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (History of the Northern Peoples) (1555) both feature images and descriptions of dozens of horrifying monsters that swim, chase, consume and sport.⁷⁵ Images from the *Carta marina*, including sections on Finland, Iceland, and the

⁷¹ *Konge-speilet*, ed. Keyser, Munch, and Unger, chap. 16. English translation from *The King’s Mirror*, trans. by Larsen, p. 136.

⁷² *Konge-speilet*, ed. Keyser, Munch, and Unger, chap. 16. English translation from *The King’s Mirror*, trans. by Larsen, p. 137.

⁷³ *Konge-speilet*, ed. Keyser, Munch, and Unger, chap. 16. English translation from *The King’s Mirror*, trans. by Larsen, p. 137.

⁷⁴ *Konge-speilet*, ed. Keyser, Munch, and Unger, chap. 17. English translation from *The King’s Mirror*, trans. by Larsen, p. 141.

⁷⁵ Two recent and well-illustrated publications focus on sea monsters and Olaus Magnus. Van Duzer, in his *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps* (pp. 81–86), and Nigg, in *Sea Monsters: A Voyage around the World’s Most Beguiling Map*, focus on Olaus’s contributions



Figure 8.1: The water-dwelling inhabitants off the northern Norwegian coast. Detail from Olaus Magnus, *Carta marina*, Uppsala University Library. 1539. Digital version released into public domain by Uppsala University Library.

Western Islands, feature some of the species first described by Adam of Bremen or the *King's Mirror*, but magnified and given terrifying life in Olaus's spectacular map (Figure 8.1). The massive *Carta marina*, 125 × 170 cm, depicts not just whales but monsters, mammals, eddies, flotsam, jetsam, and wee screaming sailors, who fought and were overcome by all of the aforementioned terrors.

Olaus served briefly in 1518 as a papal legate in northern Norway, and continued to work in some capacity towards serving and strengthening the Catholic Church until his death in 1557. During his service in northern Norway, he was exposed to the environment and traditions of the most northern Scandinavian cultures. While later living in Poland during a period of exile from Sweden, Olaus began the *Carta marina* (1527–1539), aimed at exposing the northern world to the papacy and other southerners. The twenty-two-book *Historia* was written later to accompany his fine map but also to inform church officials about the now religiously aberrant northerners. While relying on ancient

to cartography and medieval maritime culture. See also Jørgensen this volume on other northern animals on Olaus's map.

authorities, Olaus also includes contemporary information and stories from fishermen and mariners, and his own observations of northern lands and seas, particularly in Book XXI, the corpus of whales and monsters.⁷⁶

As context for his discussion of the whales that dominated the seas and threatened sailors in *Historia's* Book XXI, and upon the fabulous *Carta* (Figure 8.2), Olaus provides a lengthy discussion of the ocean itself. His ocean is the classical Oceanus, fertile, fantastic, uncontrolled and magical:

Admirabile spectaculum vastus Oceanus in suo gurgite cunctis nationibus offert: diversos partus ostendit, hosque non tam magnitudine et comparatione syderum mirabiles, quam forma minaces adducit, vt nec cœlo, nec terra, aut eius visceribus, aut domesticis instrumentis aliquid abscondi videatur, quod non adsit in sua profunditate retentum. In eo nanque Oceano tam lato, supino, molli, ac sertili accremento accipiente semina genitalia, sublimi semperque pariente natura, pleraque esse monstifica reperiuntur.

(Within its swirling waters the vast Ocean presents a wonderful spectacle to every nation. It brings forth to view its various offspring, striking us not in their hugeness and similarity to the constellations, so much as with their menacing shapes, so that there appears to be nothing hidden in the heavens, on earth, in earth's bowels or even among our household stores, which is not preserved in its depths. Inside this broad expanse of fluid Ocean, which admits the seeds of life with fertile growth, as sublime Nature ceaselessly gives birth, a conglomeration of monsters may be found.)⁷⁷

Northern waters presented legions of challenges to Norwegians who sought to plumb the depths:

Periculosa piscatura in Norvegiano Oceano ob multiplices rationes dicitur, [...] tempestatibus ortis, celerrim piscatores fludibus obruuntur: tum fluitante mole maxima glacierum disperguntur: balenarum monstrorum que pugna in diversa diuiduntur

⁷⁶ Thomas of Cantimpré, Vincent of Beauvais, Pliny, Procopius, Albertus Magnus, Saint Ambrose, Strabo, Orosius, Avicenna, and Jerome, and more. See also aforementioned Nigg, *Sea Monsters*, and Van Duzer, *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps*, as well as Szabo, *Monstrous Fishes*, chap. 6.

⁷⁷ Olaus Magnus, *A Description of the Northern Peoples*, trans. by Fisher and Higgins, bk XXI, Preface. The Latin for all Olaus Magnus passages is taken from the original 1555 version published in an electronic version by Project Runeberg <<http://runeberg.org/olmagnus/>> [accessed 20 September 2017].

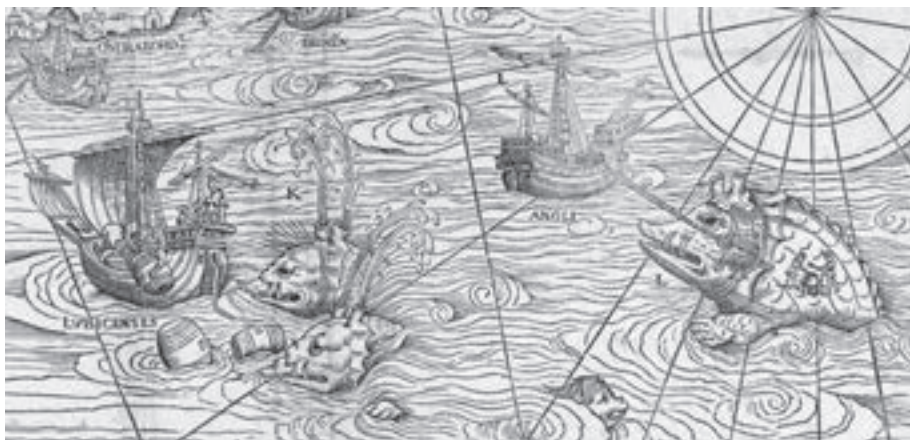


Figure 8.2: Sea monsters attacking ships off Iceland.
Detail from Olaus Magnus, *Carta marina*, Uppsala University Library. 1539.
Digital version released into public domain by Uppsala University Library.

(Fishing in the Norwegian Ocean is said to be dangerous for a large number of reasons [...]. Terrible storms spring up, in which the fishermen are rapidly engulfed by the waves; or they are scattered by giant blocks of floating ice; or they are detached from their fellows and forced to sail in different directions when they fight with whales or other sea monsters).⁷⁸

From fierce storminess and dangerous ice to animal challenges, the monstrosity of the northern environment may be indicative of changing marine conditions or climates, and amplified ocean dangers, in Olaus's own age or within recent cultural memory.

Olaus borrows liberally throughout Book XXI of *Historia* from ancient and contemporary authors, including and especially Saint Ambrose and his *Hexameron*. Regarding the Atlantic, Ambrose noted a similar trepidation as Olaus, but perhaps in equal measures of terror and wonder. To Ambrose, the Atlantic was synonymous with whales, and while emphatic in relating the presence of whales, his account on the animals themselves is derivative and unde-tailed.⁷⁹ Olaus perfects Ambrose's narrative, offering not only enthusiasm but

⁷⁸ Olaus Magnus, *A Description of the Northern Peoples*, trans. Fisher and Higgs, bk XXI, chap. 1.

⁷⁹ St Ambrose writes: 'We wish, now, to return to the Atlantic Ocean. What whales are found there, of huge bulk and measureless size! If they were to float on the surface of the sea, you would imagine that they were islands or extremely high mountains whose peaks reach to

near limitless detail on the species of whales, behaviours, economic value, and their threat to sailors. Olaus's *Historia* is a cacophony, in which both the sea itself and the monsters within it work in tandem. For example, fishermen told Olaus of the powers of captive mermen to bring malevolent seas and ruin upon the arrogant sailors, an elaboration on the same creature described in the earlier *King's Mirror*: 'nisi tales capti illico dimissi fuerint, adeo sæva tempestas exurgit cum horrido planctu eius generis hominum, ac nonnullorum aliorum monstro-rum, vt cœlium ruere videatur' (if you take them prisoner but do not promptly release them, such a violent storm arises, accompanied by a frightful wailing of these man-like creatures and several of the other monsters, that the heavens seem to be crashing down).⁸⁰ The whole of the North Atlantic for Olaus is filled with similar terrors:

Sunt monstrosi pisces in littoribus, seu mari Norvagico, inusitati nominis (licet reputentur de genere cetorum) qui immanitatem suam primo aspectu ostendunt, horroremque intuentibus incutiunt, tum in formidinem diutius conspicientes pariter & stuporem vertunt. Horribilis etenim formæ sunt, capitibus quadratis, vndique spinosis & acutis, ac longis cornibus circumdatis, instar radicis arboris extirpatæ: decem, aut duodecim cubitorum longitudine, colore nigerrimo, prægrandibus oculis [...] pupilla [...] rubeum & flammeum colorem referens, qui a longe in tenebrosis temporibus inter vndas, veluti ignis accensus, piscantibus apparet: pilos, vt anserinas pennas, spissos & longos, in modum dependentis barbæ: reliquum vero corpus ad magnitudinem capitis (quod quadratum est) valde pusillum [...]. Vna harum beluarum plures naves & grandes, fortissimos nautis consertas, facillime subvertit, aut mergit.

(Off the coasts or out in the Norwegian sea are found monster fish with strange names (though they are reckoned to be species of whale). Their savageness is apparent at first glimpse, since they cause spectators to tremble and anyone who gazes longer at them grows terrified and numb. In shape they are dreadful, for they have square heads armed everywhere with sharp spines and surrounded by long horns like the roots of an upturned tree. These heads are fifteen to eighteen feet long, jet black, and set with huge globular eyes [...]. The pupil [...] is coloured a flaming red and during the hours of darkness it seems to far-off fishermen like a blazing fire amid the waves. Hanging down like a beard are long, thick hairs resembling goose-

the sky! These animals are said to appear, not on the coast or on shore, but in the depths of the Atlantic Ocean. To catch sight of them sailors are enticed to risk navigation within those regions. But these elemental mysteries are not likely to be faced without experiencing mortal terror!' St Ambrose, *Hexameron*, trans. by Savage, VI, 32, 187.

⁸⁰ Olaus Magnus, *A Description of the Northern Peoples*, trans. Fisher and Higgens, bk XXI, Preface.

feathers. Compared with their enormous square heads the rest of the body is quite small [...]. A single one of these monsters can quite easily capsize or sink several large ships crammed with the strongest sailors.)⁸¹

The moderation of the *King's Mirror* is replaced with hyperbole, but not without a substratum of observational evidence. Olaus shows us how monsters with glowing red eyes terrorized fishermen but also how whales were dragged ashore, butchered and processed, and ultimately consumed:

Cetis, seu balenis e mari piscatorum arte, ingenio, & magno labore extractis, sive vi ventorum ac tempestatum, aut inimicorum piscium furia littoribus impulsis, incolæ prædam securibus, & ascis partiuntur, ita vt ex vnus balenæ, sive ceti carne, pinguedine, & ossibus, CCL. vel CCC. plaustra repleti possint. Carnem & lardum in multis, & magnis vasis, inter cæteros immensos marinos pisces sale condiunt: eaque pro commoditate, & esca domestica vtuntur, aliisque ad eum vsum vendunt in remotas orbis partes deferenda.

(When sea-monsters or whales have been hauled out of the sea thanks to the fishermen's skill, resourcefulness and strenuous toil, or driven on beaches by violent wind and storm, or by the wrath of hostile fish, the people of the neighborhood divide the booty with axes and hatchets in such a way that with the meat, blubber, and bones of a single whale or monster they can fill between 250 and 300 carts. After they have put the meat and fat into vast numbers of large barrels, they preserve it in salt, as they do other huge sea-fish. They use it for home consumption according to need, or sell it to others who will export it to distant lands for the same purposes.)⁸²

Why go out to sea and risk encounters with such horrors, as the son in the *King's Mirror* also asked? Many fishermen from across Europe took up the challenge and faced the unique terrors of the northern oceans. At least one historian has speculated that Olaus invented these terrifying narratives in order to protect Norwegian fishing ventures.⁸³ Despite the fear that the seas evoked in both sailors and terrestrial folk, the sea was an essential provider of resources for northern peoples, who eagerly harvested shorelines for flotsam and jetsam and stranded creatures. In fact, 'provident Nature' had compensated for the meagre resources of northern climes by providing northerners with a unique array of maritime resources:

⁸¹ Olaus Magnus, *A Description of the Northern Peoples*, trans. Fisher and Higgens, bk XXI, chap. 5.

⁸² Olaus Magnus, *A Description of the Northern Peoples*, trans. Fisher and Higgens, bk XXI, chap. 20.

⁸³ Van Duzer, *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps*, p. 86.

Cum vehementia frigorū in extremis partibus Septentrionis, & validæ tempestatē ibidem haud sinant in altum crescere arbores, e quibus erigi possint necessaria ædes: ideo provida natura incolis prospexit, vt ex ingentissimis beluarum costis fabricare valeant domos, & reliqua necessaria in eisdem. [...] certum est ex eis relinqui talia, tamque vasla ossa, quod e his integræ habitationes, tum quoad parietes, portas, fenestras, tecta, sedilia, tum etiam quoad mensas, confici queant. Hæ enim costæ XX. XXX. aut plurium pedum sunt: præterea spinæ, spondyli, atque vasti capitis bifurcata ossa haud parvam in se quantitatem habent.

(The severe frosts and powerful storms in the extreme parts of the North do not allow any reasonable growth to the trees from which folk could build the homes they need. Consequently, provident Nature has taken thought for the inhabitants and enabled them to construct houses and all the requisite furniture within the gigantic ribs of these animals [...] it is a known fact that the bones which remain are so strong and enormous that people can produce from them entire homes: walls, doors, windows, roofs, chairs, and even tables. The ribs are twenty to thirty feet long, or even more, while the spinal vertebrae and the forked bones of the colossal skull are themselves of no small magnitude.)⁸⁴

The most interesting feature of Olaus' study of these houses is that even when the whale bones were fashioned into a house, there remained a constant recognition that the house retained the character or force of the monstrous whale.⁸⁵ According to Olaus, northern Norwegians believed that the whale whose bones sheltered the household became the subject of the dreams of those who dwelt within: 'Dormientes inter has costas non alia insomnia vident, quam si continue in fluctibus marinis laborarent, aut in tempestatibus ad naufragium vsque periclitarentur' (Those who sleep inside these ribs are forever dreaming that they are toiling incessantly on the ocean waves or, harassed by storms, are in perpetual danger of shipwreck).⁸⁶ The house became an embodiment of the rough northern seas themselves.

⁸⁴ Olaus Magnus, *A Description of the Northern Peoples*, trans. Fisher and Higgens, bk XXI, chap. 22.

⁸⁵ Olaus continues: 'Once the flesh and internal organs of the massive beast have wasted away and perished, only the bones remain, in the shape of a huge keel. After the skeleton has eventually been cleansed by rains and fresh air, strong men are enlisted to erect it in the form of a house. The one who is supervising its construction exerts himself to put windows at the top of the building or in the monster's sides [...]. The doors are made from the creature's hide, which has long since been stripped off for this or some different purpose and hardened by the rough winds.' Olaus Magnus, *A Description of the Northern Peoples*, trans. by Fisher and Higgens, bk XXI, chap. 22.

⁸⁶ Olaus Magnus, *A Description of the Northern Peoples*, trans. Fisher and Higgens, bk XXI, chap. 24.

While he notes the roles of whales and even monsters in northern economies, Olaus's focus is monsters, not real whales, which seems to underscore his status as a visitor to the North. His monsters are not localized, as they were in the *Historia Norwegie* or the *King's Mirror*. They are found across the map, both actual and conceptual, where they stand as landmarks, dangerous beacons for sailors who dare to traverse the seas. It should be noted that the seas closest to his own home in Sweden, like those of the next author, Adriaen Coenen, remained distinctly free from monsters. Monsters were relegated by Olaus and by Adriaen to the 'North', not to home.

Cataloguing Post-Medieval Whales: A Brief Look at Adriaen Coenen and Jón Guðmundsson

As this study concludes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we see a contraction of the monstrous creatures and wild seas. In this period, monsters on maps become decorative rather than dangerous, but fascination with them remained. Adriaen Coenen (1514–1587) combined the work of Olaus Magnus with popular knowledge, natural history, and first-hand observation in his *Visboec* (Fish Book) written 1577–79 and *Walvisboec* (Whale Book) written 1584–85.⁸⁷ Coenen, a fisherman's son, served as a clerk at a fish auction house in Scheveningen. He routinely combed the North Sea shore and made drawings of new specimens, kept alongside his watercolour copies of Olaus's creatures. His work was unlike that of Olaus, as it was popular and folksy. Coenen offered unique observations found nowhere else in the more scholarly works of the period. Then again, much like Olaus, Coenen's maritime experience was seemingly confined to personal observations from the shore.

Throughout the charming watercolours of *The Whale Book*, Coenen details individual specimens and their stories. These are the preindustrial seas, in which whales must have flourished in massive pods and high populations (Figure 8.3). Coenen's seas are not monstrous at all; the only monsters he knows come from the pages of Olaus. The seas around his village bring fish and very large whales, but no terrors. The northern waters, for Coenen, are known from stories, but he does record one event that links his peaceful world to the wilder North:

It happens every year, usually once or twice, sometimes more often. A large group of big fish pass by our village of Scheveningen, coming from the north, and they all trek westwards following the same course past the land, and they leap out of

⁸⁷ Coenen, *The Whale Book*, ed. by Egmond and Mason.



Figure 8.3: A migration of whales. From Adrianen Coenen, *Visboeck*, The Hague, KB: 78 E 54. 1577–79. Image released into public domain.

the water – some of them emerge completely from the water, others only half, and they look as if they are chasing one another. When we stand there on the coast near our village this is what we see [...]. We see these fish in such numbers [...] that it is impossible to count them. It last for two hours [...] [and] it usually takes place when the weather is fair and calm, but that trek is almost always followed within three days by a big storm and tempest.⁸⁸

These migrating whales, coming from the north, are always followed by storms, perhaps like those brought by mermen of Greenland in the *King's Mirror*, and like the monsters of Olaus's narrative whose powers are seemingly wrapped up with the sea. With this migration, perhaps of the now-extinct North Atlantic grey whales, or perhaps humpbacks, northern whales brought terrors and storms to the south.⁸⁹ Whether the whales bring the weather, or cause the unrest, is not explicitly stated by Coenen, but in these unusual sightings, the whales are certainly associated with that explicitly northern marine chaos.

The work of Jón Guðmundsson (also known as Jón laerði or the Learned), who lived about a century after Olaus and Adriaen, provides a logical point of conclusion for this study, for in Jón's age, the monsters died.⁹⁰ Jón's perspective

⁸⁸ Coenen, *The Whale Book*, ed. by Egmond and Mason, p. 108. Note that this edition provides only English translation. The original Dutch has not been consulted.

⁸⁹ Bennema and Rijnsdorp, 'Fish Abundance, Fisheries, Fish Trade'.

⁹⁰ Jón laerði has received far too little attention in academic circles, a wrong recently righted by Viðar Hreinsson's book on this author: *Jón laerði og náttúrur*. See also Hreinsson's 'Ghosts, Power and the Natures of Nature'. Access to Jón laerði's work is hampered, in part, by

on monsters and whales and seas were pragmatic and unflappable (Figure 8.4). Jón Guðmundsson composed his *Natural History of Iceland* between 1640 and 1644. While he is the latest author considered here, and while his text builds upon earlier works including the *King's Mirror*, Jón is noted for his original contributions in illustrations and observations, hence his nickname 'laerði'. Some of his cetacean knowledge came from his acquaintance with contemporary Basque whalers of the Westfjords, some from his own craftwork with whale and walrus ivory (another nickname, *tannsmiður* — tooth-smith). He also had frequent opportunity to observe whales first-hand, for 'he lived for a long time near Steingrímsfjörður which of all bays was most frequented by whales'. His work is called 'the most important Icelandic contribution to cetology down to the times when more scientific investigations began'.⁹¹

Jón's work is notable in many ways, but mostly for his extraordinary images of whales, said to have been 'drawn from living models, or at least from memory', due to the 'striking likeness' with real species.⁹² His whales are the first to truly resemble species and not monstrosities. Jón is a fitting author to conclude with, for during his age, the monsters of Iceland had drawn their last terrible breaths: 'as to monsters he confesses that he has seen many but that they had all disappeared in the severe winter of 1602'.⁹³ In the midst of the so-called Little Ice Age, monstrous whales had left the local seas, perhaps retreating Far North, or extirpated by human means.

Conclusions on the Maritime North

The texts and authors surveyed here offer us an inkling of shifting perspectives. No short survey can do proper justice to this millennium-long span of authors and ideas, but additional questions can be asked and a thesis proposed. Tacitus and Ottar present early perspectives of a world in which the northern seas' power, more properly Ocean itself, had the potential to overwhelm. Monsters were present, but they merely were novelties or distractions. The North, in the eyes of these two men, is not the same space, but was conceptually characterized by similarly powerful seas. By the time of the *Historia Norwegie*, the seas

the absence of translations into English, which future scholars will no doubt remedy following Hreinsson's work.

⁹¹ Hermannsson, *Jón Guðmundsson and his Natural History of Iceland*, pp. xxvi–ii.

⁹² Hermannsson, *Jón Guðmundsson and his Natural History of Iceland*, p. xxiii.

⁹³ Hermannsson, *Jón Guðmundsson and his Natural History of Iceland*, p. xxv.



Figure 8.4. Natural depictions of whales. From Jón Guðmundsson, *Natural History of Iceland*, pls 49/55. Landsbókasafn Íslands — Háskólabókasafn, JS 401 XI a-e 4to.

Image released into the public domain by National and University Library of Iceland.

were less of a threat than the monsters which the author has begun to name and enumerate. The *King's Mirror* acknowledges the powers of both waters and whales, but again, the seas were less terrible than the monsters, particularly as the terrors shifted geographically to Greenland's seas. The *King's Mirror*, like *Historia Norwegie*, was written during a climatic era when storms, according to some paleoclimatologists and scholars, had abated both in ferocity and endurance, the seas were calmer, and the climate more favourable. Perhaps whales had risen to a new and terrible prominence in correlation with the relative pacification of the seas.

By the sixteenth century, the age of Olaus Magnus, monsters were firmly in charge and found across the North Atlantic, but now they worked in tandem with the vicious, icy, storm-riddled seas. Olaus had no choice but to equate the northern waters with terrifying creatures run amok. Coenen's calmer and more sheltered Dutch waters offered no such terrors, but did bring northern spectacle when the whales migrated south, bringing the storms with them. Aware of all these traditions, Jón's Icelandic seas swam with whales which he knew well,

but the monsters had, by this time, abated, done in and swallowed up by storms against which they could not contend. The Middle Ages in the North Atlantic began with monstrous whales and waters, but as it ended, natural history had taken hold and the monsters were essentially extinguished.

Rough seas and sea monsters come and go, perhaps in conjunction with the greater patterns of changeable North Atlantic and Subarctic climate regimes. The authors presented here offer important observations on changing animal populations across the North Atlantic and connecting oceans and seas. Rather than dismiss these accounts as creative monster tales, we should scrutinize these sources as proxy data for ongoing climate transitions during the extremely active second millennium. Marginal ecologies like the Subarctic or North Atlantic are thought to be more sensitive and responsive to climate changes; likewise, marine taxa — monstrous or not — could reflect those changing patterns through their migrations and behaviours.

The northern maritime world was the ultimate wilderness, a world that was simultaneously unchanging and constantly mobile. Changes in coastlines, beaches, sea levels, drift patterns all could signal greater changes beneath the waves.⁹⁴ Coastlines were also places where whales or monsters were most commonly encountered, intact or in states of decay, putrefication, or inflation. While today we can turn to scientific analysis of a complex global system of currents and winds and temperature to begin to understand our changing oceans, medieval observers, particularly those commenting on the comparative northern shallows around Iceland, Greenland, Britain, and Scandinavia, found other means of explanation.⁹⁵ Ancient and medieval people would have witnessed contemporary changes in the animal populations of the oceans and seas, and here we return to the dangerous and challenging northern oceans and the monsters that symbolically defined them.

⁹⁴ The transformative capacity of sea ice, both as a long-term architect of shorelines but also as a seasonal habitat for a variety of large (polar bears, seals) and small (algae, zoo- and phytoplankton) organisms, cannot be underestimated: 'Ice-loss-driven amplification of arctic warming is a potentially important driver of ecological dynamics in the region, where seasonal temperature limitation is an important constraint on productivity'; Post and others, 'Ecological Consequences of Sea-Ice Decline'. See also Barnett and others, 'Late Holocene Sea-level Change in Arctic Norway'.

⁹⁵ Climate change impacts may be felt more immediately in marine contexts than terrestrial, particularly in marginal ecologies; see Cronin and Cronin, 'Biological Response to Climate Change'; Fossheim and others, 'Recent Warming Leads to a Rapid Borealization'; Robinson and others, 'Trailing Edges Projected to Move Faster'.

Accounts of the premodern northern world must be calibrated to consider how changing ecologies affected depictions of the north. Whales and other marine mammals were bellwethers. Their movements, presence or absence, would be noted by medieval authors and illustrators as precursors or indicators of new climate conditions:⁹⁶ ‘Despite the apparent lack of physical boundaries in the marine environment, geographical differences, often at surprisingly fine scales, are reflected in the morphology, phenology, behavioural ecology, diet and ultimately population genetic structure of the various marine mammals that were once thought to freely roam the oceans.’⁹⁷ Historians are familiar with the terrestrial effects of the climate shifts of the late Middle Ages but have been less attentive to changes in the oceans. We lack the capacity to securely estimate marine mammal populations in the premodern era, but we can ask and investigate more effectively changes in range and behaviours.⁹⁸ The accounts surveyed here, presenting stories of uniquely northern oceans, are also unparalleled sources of proxy data for medieval environmental histories.

Reconstruction of the paleo-oceanic environment must be more than an interesting side note for medieval historians.⁹⁹ Coupled with cutting-edge strategies of climate analysis, the sources presented here serve as an early source of ‘Local and Traditional Knowledge’ (LTK) for changing Atlantic conditions.¹⁰⁰ These sources also allow medieval historians, particularly those focusing on climate-critical northern histories, to participate in critical dialogues with colleagues in the natural sciences about conservation:

⁹⁶ Behaviours of Arctic species are documented in their transition during periods of climate adjustment and change. Polar bears, whales, seals, and sea birds seek out new prey, which can result in species shifts, new competitors for resources, and countless adjustments across the food web. From the highest keystone predators to the most lowly trophic feeders, changes within Arctic, Subarctic, and Atlantic environments affect the entire ecosystem, including human settlers. For a recent example, see Aars and others, ‘White-Beaked Dolphins Trapped in the Ice’; see also Nøttestad and others, ‘Recent Changes in Distribution and Relative Abundance’; Vikingsson and others, ‘Distribution, Abundance, and Feeding Ecology’.

⁹⁷ Evans, Anderwald, and Wright, ‘Marine Mammal Research’.

⁹⁸ Lambert and others, ‘Cetacean Range and Climate’.

⁹⁹ One of the most concise and useful guides to historical marine ecology is found in the following short transdisciplinary survey cited throughout this article; see Lotze and others, ‘Uncovering the Ocean’s Past’.

¹⁰⁰ Such approaches are illustrated in a sophisticated and compelling manner in Harrison and Maher, *Human Ecodynamics in the North Atlantic*.

Realistically, marine scientists need to know about long-term changes in species abundance and distribution. Which species that were once abundant are now extinct or vastly diminished? How have ranges contracted or concentrations become diffused? How has essential habitat changed? What kinds of organisms have filled vacant ecological niches? [...] Answers to these questions provide the best evidence we can hope for in anticipating the consequences of conservation actions.¹⁰¹

Medieval descriptions of northern seas and marine mammals, both monstrous and commonplace, have value beyond their more conventional use for historical insights into life and literature in premodern North Europe. With these unique premodern visions of northern seas, we can document effects of climate change on medieval northern maritime communities. Manifested in accounts of transforming animal populations, monstrous whales were climate bellwethers, presaging more monstrous and massive ecological challenges that defined the premodern North.

¹⁰¹ Jackson and Alexander, 'Introduction', p. 4.

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BEASTLY BELONGING IN THE PREMODERN NORTH

Dolly Jørgensen

Animalivm genera vti multa, variaque sunt in toto terrarum orbe, suis provinciis, & naturis appropriata, ac distributa, vt elephantēs, cameli, leopardi, leones, struthiones, tigrides, simeæ, & id genus reliqua, sine pilorum densitate in calidis terris numero incomparabili multiplicata: Ita & in frigidis regionibus complures reperiuntur bestię, sed valde pilosę, propter asperrinas hyemes exuperandas: vt sunt vrsi albi, vri nigri, alces alti, rangiferi proceri, lupi feroces, gulones voraces, lynces perspicaces, lutrę fallaces, castores medicinales, damulę pavidę, vulpeculę astutę, nigrę, & albę, atque alię alibi inusitatę naturę, & nominis bestię, successivis capitibus inferius per ordinem diligentius insinuandę.

(There are many different kinds of animal spread across the globe, which are assigned their own spheres and allotted their own characteristics. Just as unequalled numbers of those without very thick hair, including elephants, camels, leopards, lions, ostriches, tigers, apes, and their like, swarm in hot countries, so also in cold regions you may find many beasts with dense fur because of the bitterly cold winters they have to overcome. Such are polar bears, black aurochs, tall elks, large reindeer, savage wolves, voracious gluttons, sharp-eyed lynxes, crafty otters, beavers useful in medicine, timid roe deer, cunning foxes, both black and white, and elsewhere other wild animals with uncommon natures and names which I shall introduce methodically in successive chapters below.)¹

¹ All English translations of Olaus Magnus's *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* are taken from the translation edited by Peter Foote. A Latin text is available for the original 1555 version published as an electronic version by Project Runeberg <<http://runeberg.org/olmag->

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When Olaus Magnus (1490–1557) introduced his two books on domestic and wild animals in the magisterial *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* ('Description of the Peoples of the North') from 1555, he did so in terms of biogeography, the study of the distribution of species in geographical space and time. He argued that different species exist in different places in the world and their bodies are best configured for living in those environments. Animals were perfectly adapted to specific climates and would flourish only there: 'Sobrie tamen de vniuscujusque animantis genere, vbicunque vivat, est sentiendum: quia invariabilis naturæ lex ita statuit, vt nullibi melius, quam vbi productum sit, persistere possit' (One must, however, prudently observe the habitat and nature of each breed, for an invariable law of Nature has laid it down that it can continue its existence nowhere better than the place where it was born).² For example, if reindeer were taken to foreign countries, 'ob cæli solique mutationem, aut insolitam escam (nisi pastore consueto cibentur) non diu supersunt' (they do not survive long, owing to the change of climate and soil, or, unless they are fed by their usual herdsman, to the unaccustomed food).³ Animals and geographies of the North were irrevocably linked for Olaus Magnus. Certain animals belonged there and only there.

One of the places in which we can witness the placing of animals in space is on maps. Wilma George argued in her seminal study *Animals and Maps* that the animals depicted on maps in the premodern era were placed in neither a fictitious nor haphazard fashion. Instead, the localization of animals was of interest to mapmakers 'to stress the difference between various parts of the world rather than the similarities'.⁴

Examining animal images on maps of Scandinavia, like the *Carta marina* made by Olaus Magnus in 1539, can expose how the North and its fauna were understood in the premodern era as distinct from the fauna of Continental Europe, as well as Africa and other distant lands. As Olaus Magnus writes: 'Licet in Septentrionalibus terries plus, quam in alia orbis vlla regione, videntur asperima frigora prædominari: tamen innumerabilis ibidem etaim ignoti generis

nus/> [accessed 20 September 2017]. The books on land animals in the text are Books XVII and XVIII. Citations are given to the book and chapter of Olaus Magnus's original text. Quote from the Preface of Book XVIII. This research was funded by the Swedish research council Formas through the author's project 'The Return of Native Nordic Fauna'.

² Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk XVII, Preface.

³ Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk XVII, chap. 27.

⁴ George, *Animals and Maps*, p. 25.

animalium reperitur' (Although in northern lands more than any other region of the earth we see periods of bitter cold prevail, a countless throng of animals can be discovered there, including some species otherwise unknown).⁵ The northern animals belong in the North, and the North is characterized by them. I will argue that mapmakers chose animals to represent the essential character of the North in the illustrated premodern maps.

Interpreting Animals on Maps

The theoretical underpinning of this analysis of animals on premodern maps of the North comes from Denis Wood and John Fels' work in *The Natures of Maps*. They argue that a map is a system of propositions, rather than a representation as has often been claimed. The fundamental cartographic proposition on a map is *this is there*, called a *posting* by Wood and Fels. The *posting* both locates *this* at a particular *there*, and tells the viewer that *there* consists of *this*. According to Wood and Fels, the *this is there* claim is a powerful proposition because it implies the ability to verify it physically: 'you can go there and check it out'.⁶ Premodern maps even explicitly make *this is there* claims in their labels. The Latin phrase 'Hic sunt' (Here are) is a common way of beginning textual elements tied to imagery on the maps. The image and text are then bound to a specific geographical spot. Putting an animal on a map is then equivalent to the claim that *this* (an animal) is *there* (in Scandinavia, or even more specifically, in the far northern reaches of Scandinavia), as well as claiming that *there* (Scandinavia) is made of *these* (specific animals).

We can interpret the *this is there* proposition as a claim of *belonging*. Rather than being about only inclusion or exclusion, belonging is about fitting into an environment through sets of nested relationships.⁷ Belonging thus concerns the construction of biocultural relationships. When a map in this chapter posts an animal on a map of Scandinavia (*this is there*), the map is making a claim that the animal belongs to the North. The animal and the North are related, co-understood, and co-constructed.

Wood and Fels also develop the useful and insightful concept of *paramap*. The paramap contains the things surrounding the map which give the map

⁵ Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk XVIII, chap. 4. For an analysis of medieval perceptions of oceanic animals, see Szabo's essay in this volume.

⁶ Wood and Fels, *The Natures of Maps*, p. xvi.

⁷ O'Gorman, 'Belonging', p. 284.

meaning. Paramap elements can be immediately adjacent to the map — the title, legend, paper, binding, inscriptions, notes, illustrations, and so forth — or elements that, while not physically attached to the map, surround the text socially to give it specific meaning, such as advertisements, lectures, and companion volumes.⁸ The entire context of viewing and reading the map depends on the paramap. Thus when discussing Olaus Magnus's *Carta marina*, his *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, as well as the commentary physically located on the map as an extended legend, has to be considered as paramap because it would have provided the context for reading the map.⁹

In the premodern era there were of course various types of maps made for specific purposes, but the ones with animals tend to be decorative or instructional maps rather than practical ones. Medieval manuscript maps of the known world, called *mappaemundi*, sometimes indicated distinguishing features for various geographies around the world. Illustrations of and explanatory text about key cities, non-European peoples, and animals fill the largest of these maps, such as the well-known Ebstorf (c. 1235) and Hereford (c. 1300) maps. *Mappaemundi* functioned as pictorial historical chronicles as well as conveying Christian messages to be found in Creation.¹⁰ Monsters, those creatures thought to be amazing and exotic, and which often conveyed a Christian message or lesson, typically inhabit the edges of the map. According to Chet van Duzer, their placement on the edges sprung from ideas that monstrosity was a product of extreme climates and that monsters were located at the ends of the earth.¹¹ The edge of the world is unknown and thus becomes known through the monsters on the maps. Scandinavia, as a place on the edge of the map in an extreme climate, would be ripe for inhabitation by the exotic and the rare with this view of the monstrous.

Building on the work of Wilma George, Wood and Fels argue that medieval *mappaemundi* transformed animals which had been previously located only in

⁸ Wood and Fels, *The Natures of Maps*, pp. 8–9.

⁹ This is particularly true in the case of *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, which Olaus Magnus likely intended as an extended commentary companion to his map: Sjöholm, “Things to be Marvelled at Rather than Examined”, pp. 248–49.

¹⁰ See Woodward, ‘Medieval *Mappaemundi*’, for a full description of the genre and numerous visual examples.

¹¹ Van Duzer, ‘Hic sunt dracones’, p. 390. See also van Duzer, *Sea Monsters*, for examples of a specific monster type on the edges. We should note, however, that the monstrous is joined by the miraculous, such as Eden, in the outer extremes of the world, as discussed in Mittman, *Maps and Monsters*, chap. 3.

texts such as bestiaries into spatial realities. By being placed onto a map in a particular place, the animals gained locations and acquired neighbours, creating geographical faunal associations. 'Posting the animals on the plane of the map made them more animal', Woods and Fels argue. 'It made them real'.¹²

Cartography in the fifteenth century shifted towards more detailed portolan charts which were useful in sea navigation. For this reason, most portolans show only the ports of call and sailing directions, rather than images of weird and wonderful things of the world. We see a proliferation of images of naval vessels on Renaissance maps in conjunction with European expansionist ideas.¹³ Some legendary features such as Prester John, the four rivers of paradise, and mythical islands continued to appear, but these were placed around the periphery or in the interior of continents.¹⁴ In a few cases, Nordic fauna was recorded on the map, probably because of its position on the edges and its similar legendary character.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, atlases, which showed regions of the world in more detail than the *mappaemundi* or portolan charts, became common. Because these maps zoom in on a region, they offered the opportunity for mapmakers to place animals even more discretely within regions.¹⁵ Instead of one image taking up a whole country, multiple images could be located across the region. By locating multiple images in the region, an associated biogeography was constructed.

Wood and Fels categorize maps of nature into eight types, each displaying a certain way of showing what nature, and by extension what the place of that nature, is.¹⁶ One of their types is 'nature as cornucopia', the category which encompasses a wide variety of maps featuring animal images, including medieval maps, modern children's atlases, and popular science species distribution maps.¹⁷ Although Wood and Fels talk about this cornucopia as cuddly and charming,

¹² Wood and Fels, *The Natures of Maps*, p. 131.

¹³ See Unger, *Ships on Maps*, for the rise and fall of ship imagery on maps from the late fourteenth through eighteenth centuries.

¹⁴ Campbell, 'Portolan Charts', p. 372.

¹⁵ Ehrensvärd, 'Cartographical Representation of the Scandinavian Arctic Regions', offers an overview of changing cartographic practice and knowledge of early modern Scandinavia. I disagree, however, with Ehrensvärd's contention that Olaus Magnus simply 'decorated the districts where he did not know the topography with figurative scenes' (p. 553). As I will show here, the scenes of animals are quite deliberately placed.

¹⁶ Wood and Fels, *The Natures of Maps*, pp. 16–21.

¹⁷ Wood and Fels, *The Natures of Maps*, Chapter 7.

the cornucopia of the medieval and early modern map is also about displaying the strange, mysterious, and dangerous, as this chapter will demonstrate.

Claiming Northern Uniqueness

While the North, particularly the arctic, does have some large animals that do not exist in more temperate climates, including the polar bear, arctic fox, and grey seal, many of the northern species also existed in premodern Continental Europe, including the brown bear, wolf, red fox, elk, beaver, and otter. On a given map, however, animals are rarely depicted more than once. Instead, they are localized and represent the essence of a place. The desire to identify northern animals as unique to northern latitudes goes back to at least Pliny the Elder, who has a chapter in his *Natural History* dedicated to animals of the north. Pliny names the European elk (*Alces alces*) and European bison (*Bison bonasus*) as being particular to northern climes, but these would not be animals that would come to represent Scandinavia in the cartography tradition.

On maps through the fifteenth century, polar bears represented Scandinavia. Polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*) live in the circumpolar Arctic, with their range limited by the southern extent of sea ice.¹⁸ While that makes them a northern species, in Europe they live only on the very northern-most edges of Norway and Russia where they have access to the sea.¹⁹ In spite of this very restricted habitation in Scandinavia, the polar bear is identified with the whole Norwegian peninsula on some medieval maps. The label for Norway includes declarations such as ‘Hic sunt ursi albi et multa animalia’ (Here are white bears and many animals) on Angellino de Dalorto’s portolan of 1325 and ‘moltes feres hi ha, ço és, cervos, orsos blancs e grifalts’ (There are many beasts here, like deer, white bears, and gyrfalcons) on the 1375 Catalan Atlas.²⁰ The inscription for Norway from Fra Mauro’s *Mappamundi* from around 1457 claims ‘Item qui se dice esser molte novità de animali maxime orsi bianchi grandissimi e de alter fere salvaçe’ (It is also said there are many new kinds of animals, espe-

¹⁸ Schliebe and others, *Ursus maritimus*.

¹⁹ The IUCN/SSC Polar Bear Specialist Group has information on the polar bear, including distribution information; <<http://pbsg.npolar.no>> [accessed 20 September 2017].

²⁰ Angellino de Dalorto’s map is available for detailed online viewing at the National Library of Australia <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-233481045/view>> [accessed 20 September 2017]. The 1375 Catalan Atlas attributed to Abraham Cresques is Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Espagnol 30 and can be viewed online at <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55002481n>> [accessed 20 September 2017].

cially huge white bears and other savage animals).²¹ While Fra Mauro did not illustrate this caption, the earlier Hereford *mappamundi* shows a large white bear in the northern reaches of Finland.²² Mecia de Viladestes filled Norway on his *Carte marine de l'océan Atlantique Nord-Est* of 1413 with a white bear and a female deer(?), as well as three birds (Figure 9.1).²³ These creatures take up the entire interior of the country, with the cities like Bergen and Trondheim on the outer rim. The Genoese map of 1457 (Figure 9.2) likewise has a deliberately extremely white polar bear labelled 'Forma ursorum alborum' in the Finland/Karelia region. These depictions of a polar bear may be indebted to Marco Polo, who when describing the Tartars of the Siberian Far North said that 'you find in their country immense bears entirely white, and more than twenty palms in length.'²⁴ Eventually the polar bear depictions moved closer to their correct locations: on Martin Behaim's globe from 1492, the polar bear has moved up to the arctic where it is being targeted by an archer;²⁵ on *Carta marina* (1539) two polar bears are found on sea ice off the coast of Iceland and another emerges from an Icelandic cave.

Although polar bears do belong in the North, they were not actually the right bear species to show inhabiting Scandinavia. That honour would go to the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*). The Borgia world map (Figure 9.3) from the first half of the fifteenth century, which exists as an original metal plate as well as later print copies based on the plate, shows a bear emerging from a den, as well as a falcon and reindeer rider in the Scandinavian peninsula.²⁶ The bear, however, is not white as on other maps but rather speckled or lightly shaded in the printed copies. The texts around the bear declare that 'extrema Norvegi(a)

²¹ Fra Mauro, *Mappamundi*, Venice, Biblioteca nazionale Marciana. A detailed description of the map along with text transcriptions and translations available in Falchetta, *Fra Mauro's World Map*.

²² See Chekin, 'Mappae Mundi and Scandinavia' for detailed images of the Hereford *mappamundi*.

²³ Mecia de Viladestes, *Carte marine de l'océan Atlantique Nord-Est*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, GE AA-566 (RES).

²⁴ Marco Polo, *The Travels*, II, 479.

²⁵ Behaim's *Erdapfel* (1492), facs. by Ravenstein <<http://collections.lib.uwm.edu/cdm/ref/collection/agdm/id/1224>> [accessed 20 September 2017].

²⁶ *Apographon descriptionis orbis terrae* (Borgia *mappamundi*), Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Stampe.Geogr.S.128. For a discussion of the map and an English translation of all legends appearing on the map, see Nordenskiöld, *An Account of a Copy from the 15th Century of A Map of the World*.





Figure 9.1: The interior of Norway is filled with animals, while a native riding a reindeer enters Sweden from the margins. Detail from Mecia de Viladestes, *Carte marine de l'océan Atlantique Nord-Est*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, GE AA-566. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 9.2: The white bear on the Genoese map of 1457.

Detail of a copy produced by the Hispanic Society of America. US Library of Congress, G3200 1457. G4 1912. Produced 1912. Image released into public domain.

e inhabilia nimio frigore' (the extreme part of Norway is uninhabitable due to excessive cold) and 'hic sunt ursi et falcones albi et consimilia' (here there are bears, white falcons, and similar). This text has reassigned the colour adjective of 'white' from the bear to the bird.²⁷ In the text, the mapmaker reinforces the placement of the bear in the Scandinavia peninsula as intention; it is 'here', *in this place*, that bears occur.

Bears — it is unclear whether they are supposed to be white or brown because all of the figures are line drawings — continue to show up in the Scandinavian Peninsula in seventeenth-century atlases. On Anders Bure's *Orbis arctoi nova et accurata delineatio* of 1626, a bear runs through Lappland north of Torneå; and on Johannes Janssonius's *Sveciæ, Norvegiæ, et Daniæ nova tabula* of 1646, two bears roam in the mountains separating Norway and Sweden.

²⁷ That the falcons in particular were identified as 'white' appears on other maps as well. The text accompanying a mid-fifteenth century map created by Claudius Clavus mentions that 'white falcons are caught' in Norway. Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, II, 266.



Figure 9.3: The Scandinavian Peninsula. Detail from a print of *Apographon descriptionis orbis terrae* [...] circa medium Saec. xv tabulae aeneae Musei Borgiani Velitris consignatae quod Camillus. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, GE D-5369. 1797. Reproduced with permission.

Yet the problem remains that brown bears also occur throughout Continental Europe. They are not restricted to Scandinavia. On Olaus Magnus's *Carta marina* a brown bear is drawn in Lithuania rather than Scandinavia. So while ten chapters of *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* are dedicated to the brown bear (one is about the polar bears in Iceland), the bear is not only Scandinavian. Olaus Magnus has a vague reference to the way that 'de nigris, ac ferocibus vrsis' (the fierce, black species of bear) is hunted 'in Aquilonaribus regnis' (in northern kingdoms) and tells an early medieval tale of a girl abducted and later impregnated by a bear in Sweden.²⁸ Primarily, he associates brown bears with Lithuania and Russia, which are 'reperiuntur terræ cavernosæ infinitis apibus, & savis plenæ' (dotted with caves that are full of innumerable bees and honeycombs).²⁹ Thus while acknowledging that the animal may exist in Scandinavia, Olaus Magnus assigned and drew the brown bear in another geography that he believed provided the most suitable habitat for the animal.

The polar bear, which represented Scandinavian fauna in the Middle Ages, was relocated on later maps to their more appropriate habitats. The brown bear, however, did not take its place as a dominant image because it was not unique enough. For that, mapmakers turned to the reindeer.

²⁸ Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk XVIII, chaps 25, 30, and 31.

²⁹ Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk XVIII, chap. 28. He also talks about Lithuanians and Russians capturing bears as performers in Chapter 32.

Reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*) lives in circumpolar tundra and arctic habitats, including Scandinavia and northern Russia. The species was known in ancient zoological treatises as the tarandrus, which was a colour-changing animal in the Scythian north.³⁰ In the medieval bestiary tradition, tarandrus or parandrus were stags with branching horns, cloven hoofs, and chameleon-like colour-changing abilities, but it was found in the south rather than north.³¹ Albertus Magnus writing in the thirteenth century identified an animal called *rangyfer* that lived in the arctic of Norway and Sweden and was similar to a deer but faster, more powerful, and with longer horns.³² Albertus's rangyfer was clearly a reindeer, even though his version had three horns. Neither the tarandrus or rangyfer traditions mentioned the domestication or uses of reindeer, but Marco Polo wrote that Siberian peoples had 'stags' which functioned both like cattle and like horses to ride upon.³³ Marco Polo's description seems to have been influential in placing semi-domesticated reindeer in the North. The Borgia world map (Figure 9.3) shows a man riding a reindeer in the southern part of the Scandinavian Peninsula. The Sami (the indigenous inhabitants of Scandinavia who herd reindeer) hunting figure appears as a common trope on portolans, including Mecia de Viladestes's *Carte marine de l'océan Atlantique Nord-Est* of 1413 (Figure 9.1).

Reindeer as the animal of the North hit a high mark in Olaus Magnus's work (Figure 9.4). Olaus Magnus wrote that reindeer were geographically tied to the north: they were found in the northern areas of Eastern and Western Bothnia, which he labelled 'enim extreme Aquilonis terræ' (lands of the extreme north); when the animals were sent as gifts to nobles outside of Sweden, they died quickly.³⁴ Reindeer were thus bound to the northern environment. The animals appear in numerous scenes of the *Carta marina* in Botnia and Lappland, including being milked, pulling wagons, and serving as cavalry. In addition to these domesticated reindeer, Olaus Magnus depicted wild reindeer crossing frozen lakes and discussed the wild type, which 'vsibus humanis subdita mansuetudine fideliter inserviunt, vbi feræ naturæ reliqui in solitudine relictī augmento generis se sociant, vt interim venatione præmantur' (being wild by

³⁰ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, II, 304.

³¹ See, for example, the Aberdeen Bestiary's entry for parandrus: <<http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beast178.htm>> [accessed 20 September 2017].

³² Albertus Magnus, *De animalibus*, II, 1421 (bk XXII, tract II, chap. 1), ed. by Stadler.

³³ Marco Polo, *The Travels*, I, chap. 56.

³⁴ Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk XVII, chap. 26.



Figure 9.4: Scandia. Detail from Olaus Magnus, *Carta marina*, Uppsala University Library. 1539. Digital version released into public domain by Uppsala University Library.

nature and allowed to remain in deserted places, herd together as their kind increases, and are sometimes pursued and hunted down).³⁵

Later maps continued highlighting reindeer as a wonderful and useful northern animal, including Liévin Algoet's *Terrarum septentrionalium exacta novissimaque description per Livinum Algoet* (1562), Antio Laferi's copy of *Carta marina* (1572), and Anders Bure's *Orbis arctoi nova et accurate delineatio* (1626). Reindeer, as an animal not found in Continental Europe in the medieval or early modern period, was a natural wonder of the North. Its uniqueness from a Continental point of view put it on the northern map.

The wolverine (*Gulo gulo*) was likewise a uniquely northern species. Wolverines live in the boreal forests and tundra of the Nordic countries, Russia and Siberia. Olaus Magnus appears to have brought international attention for the first time to wolverines, 'quæ immani voracitate creduntur insatiabilia' (whose enormous greed is believed to be insatiable) and live in northern

³⁵ Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk XVII, chap. 28.



Figure 9.5:
The wolverine. Detail from Liévin Algoet, *Terrarum septentrionalium exacta novissimaque description per Livinum Algoet et alius autoribus*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département cartes et plans, GE B-2350 (RES). 1562. Reproduced with permission.

Sweden.³⁶ The wolverines on *Carta marina* are described in the accompanying *Opera breve* as ‘animali uoraci, liquiali per nome Fitticio la chiamano guloni, perche non intermetteno mai la loro uoracita se non quando i scaricano, ouer purgano il uentre stringendosi fra doi arbori’ (voracious animals, whose nickname is ‘gluttons’ [*gulo*], because their voracity lessens only when they empty themselves, or purge their stomachs by squeezing themselves between two tree trunks).³⁷ On Algoet’s map from 1562, the wolverine is labelled as ‘Rassamaka animal insatiabus’ (rassamaka the insatiable animal) and is drawn squeezing between trees to defecate (Figure 9.5).³⁸ Later authors like Conrad Gessner and Edward Topsell would cite Olaus Magnus’s description and image of the *gulo* in their catalogs of animals.³⁹ Topsell tied the wolverine’s location in the North to the inhabitants of the North, saying that God placed it there ‘to express the abominable gluttony of the men of that Countrey’.⁴⁰ Although the wolverine was a uniquely northern species, it failed to make frequent appearances on maps of the north, perhaps because it was too newly described.

³⁶ Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk XVIII, chap. 7.

³⁷ Olaus Magnus, *Opera breve*, item B/G. English translation published in Ginsberg, *Printed Maps of Scandinavia and the Arctic*.

³⁸ The name rassamaka is also attested by Topsell who says that in Lithuania and Russia, the animal is called ‘rossomokal’: Topsell, *History of Four-Footed Beasts*, p. 205. Indeed, the wolverine in contemporary Russian is named *rosomakha* (ро́сомáха).

³⁹ Gessner, *Icones animalium*, p. 79; Topsell, *History of Four-Footed Beasts*, p. 205.

⁴⁰ Topsell, *History of Four-Footed Beasts*, p. 205.

Mapmakers chose distinctly northern species — the polar bear, reindeer, and wolverine — as icons for the north, even though their knowledge of these species was far from perfect. The animals lived in the north as their only habitat, thus they belonged there and only there. The animals were unique to the north so they could uniquely represent North as a *this is there* proposition on the map.

Where the Wild Things Are

While the illustrated medieval maps tend to have illustrations that take up an entire country because of their scale (see, e.g. Figs 7.1 and 7.3), the atlases began to differentiate geographies within the Scandinavia region. The atlas style maps by Olaus Magnus, Algoet, Laferi, Bure, and Janssonius, as well as Sebastian Münster's *Schonlandia* (1540), label subregions such as Bothnia, Laponia/Lappland, and Finmark to show distinctions within greater Scandinavia. Beginning with the work of Olaus Magnus, it was possible to associate animals with particular geographies within the region.

The animals on these atlases are conspicuously not randomly placed. They are instead restricted to the Far North, most often from Västerbotten (Sweden) and Österbotten (Finland) towards the pole. The southern parts of Scandinavia as well as the west coast of Norway are labelled with scores of towns, rivers, and mountain ranges. There are no animals there. While the immediate assumption might be that absence of animals in the south is attributed to a lack of space for the images, even open areas like mid-Sweden on Bure's map are not populated by animals.⁴¹ The south, with the bigger cities like Uppsala where Olaus Magnus lived, is envisioned as the home of people. Olaus Magnus wrote that wild creatures live in unpopulated areas, a belief which is reflected on the maps.⁴² Wildlife is deliberately kept restricted to the Far North.

On the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century atlases, north of North becomes the cartographic home of many wild animals for the first time. Elk, lynxes, wolves, foxes, beavers, and otters all became inhabitants of the Far North, often along with the indigenous Sami population. These were animals that had historically been associated with southern regions, but were relocated on maps of

⁴¹ Van Duzer claims that premodern mapmakers showed a general 'discomfort at having open space' which explains the placement of many monsters on the unknown edges: "Hic sunt dracones", p. 398.

⁴² Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk XVIII, chap. 1.



Figure 9.6: Northern Sweden. Detail from Anders Bure,
Orbis arctoi nova et accurata delineatio, Stockholm, National Library of Sweden. 1626.
 Digital version released into public domain by National Library of Sweden.

the north to the Far North in the areas far away from ‘civilization’. Yet none of these animals were in fact restricted to northern habitats—they were found in much of Continental Europe. In placing these animals in the North, a special case had to be made for their belongingness there.

The elk (*Alces alces*, known as the moose in North America) was an animal found in the north latitudes, but also in the Continental forests. While Pliny the Elder placed the animal on ‘the island of Scandinavia’,⁴³ Olaus Magnus noted that many ancient authorities had located moose in Continental Europe — Caesar in Hercynian Forest, Solinus in Germany, and Hermolaus Barbarus in France. Olaus Magnus insisted that recent authorities were in agreement that ‘vt alces sint ab Aquilone, tanquam loco originis’ (the elk’s place of origin was the north) from which it spread out to other regions.⁴⁴ On the *Ebstorf map-pamundi* an elk appears in northern Russia, making it the earliest mapping

⁴³ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, II, 263.

⁴⁴ Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk XVIII, chap. 1.

depiction of the animal.⁴⁵ Later, it would move to its Scandinavian home: Elk appear in a showdown with wolves in western Bothnia on Olaus Magnus's map, and Andres Bure places one further north in Lappland (Figure 9.6). Elk, however, do not appear on many maps after Olaus Magnus, including Algoet and Janssonius, indicating that it was not seen as iconic to the North as the bears and reindeer which appeared everywhere.

A similar move happened with beavers. Pliny the Elder had said that beavers were located in Euxine,⁴⁶ and other ancient and medieval scholars had seen beavers in Europe, including Gerald of Wales's famous description of beavers on the River Teivi. Olaus Magnus included beavers on *Carta marina* in mid-Finland. Three animals are shown participating in a common beaver myth: they are working together to move branches for building a dam by laying the branches on one beaver who is on his back and then the other two pull him (Figure 9.7). Olaus Magnus understood that he had to justify the inclusion of the beaver on his map of the north. He did so by acknowledging their presence elsewhere but making a special case for their inhabitation of the north:

Etsi Solinus Ponticas aquas tantummodo inhabitare, & genus propagare æstimat castores: tamen in Rheno, Danubio, atque paludibus Moraviæ reperitur id genus in copia magna. Sed salva hac opinione, divinæ providentiæ attribuendum est, quod maxima horum animalium abundantia est in Septentrionalibus aquis, eo quod quietiores sunt, quam Rheni, vel Danubii: vbi strepitus est, & incessabilis navigantium labor. In Aquilone infiniti fluvii sunt, & arbores aptissime, pro domibus ædificandis: quas & mira fabricant arte, docente magistra natura.

(Though Solinus thinks that beavers only live and breed in the waters of the Black Sea, this family may be found in large numbers on the Rhine and Danube, and in the Moravian marshes. Granting this, however, we must ascribe to divine providence the fact that a great throng of such creatures inhabits northern waters, inasmuch as these are more peaceful than those of the Rhine or Danube, where the commotion and incessant activity of boatmen prevail. In the North there are countless rivers, and trees which are ideally suitable as building material for the beavers' homes.)⁴⁷

In this passage, the North was depicted as ideal habitat for the beaver. While it might appear elsewhere, the geography of the North made it belong there more than anywhere. Other mapmakers did not follow suit and place beavers

⁴⁵ For a discussion of the Ebstorf mappamundi and a close-up image of the elk, see Kugler, 'Die Ebstorfer Weltkarte'.

⁴⁶ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, II, 297.

⁴⁷ Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk XVIII, chap. 5.



Figure 9.7: Beavers working together to move branches for their dam.
Detail from Olaus Magnus, *Carta marina*, Uppsala University Library. 1539.
Digital version released into public domain by Uppsala University Library.

on maps of northern Europe; rather, it became a staple of maps of northern North America, where beaver fur became a major trading commodity.

Otters appear on more northern maps than beavers, although they too are a widespread European species. Olaus Magnus included an otter on *Carta marina* in the region of Östrabothnia, Finland. The otter is shown bringing a fish to a man. In the Italian text which accompanied the map (*Opera breve*), Olaus Magnus explained the image as ‘l’animale Luthero per Finlandia, & Botnia frequente, & alcuna uolta si domestica, in modo che porta alla cucina il pesce’ (the animal Lutherus, common in Finland and Bothnia, which sometimes can be domesticated to bring fish to the kitchen).⁴⁸ In *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* Olaus says

⁴⁸ Olaus Magnus, *Opera breve*, item F/K. English translation published in Ginsberg, *Printed Maps of Scandinavia and the Arctic*.

that otter domestication of this type was practised in Sweden in which ‘vt signo dato per cocom, vadunt in piscinam, piscem magnitudine ab eo designate suscipientes, rursumque alium & alium, donec sufficit imperatis satisfacisse’ (when a cook gives the signal, they dive into a pool and catch a fish of the size he has indicated, returning for another and yet another until his instructions have been completely satisfied).⁴⁹ There is no earlier medieval literary tradition of this behaviour, so it appears to be something which Olaus Magnus was recording for the first time. Later cartographers copied the otter and fish image. Algoet’s *Terrarum septentrionalium* has a similar image in almost the same geographical spot. Anders Bure included an otter carrying a fish in its mouth (although there is no human master to be seen) in Sweden north of Luleå on his map from 1626. In Olaus Magnus’s text account, the otters are geographically situated: in northern waters, especially those of Upper Sweden Hälsingland, Medelpad, Ångermanland, Jämtland, and Eastern and Western Bothnia.⁵⁰ To Olaus in the sixteenth century, the North of North is where these animals belonged.

Wild animals on early modern maps of Scandinavia are posted in the Far North, away from the populated areas except those inhabited by Sami. The biocultural association claimed by the maps is that the North away from European civilization is an ideal home for wild animals and wild men.⁵¹

Belonging in the North

In the process of mapping the world during the late medieval and early modern periods, animals played a key part in the *this is there* propositions of the maps considered in this chapter. Animals were understood as belonging to specific places, which in turn were defined by those animals being there. The medieval and early modern maps that depict animals in the North present nature as cornucopia, a sign of the wonders of God’s creation in lands on the edge of European civilizations. Posting animals on these maps shows there are many strange and exotic creatures inhabiting the North, as well as animals more familiar to Continental readers of the maps. The maps pronounce that these particular animals *belong* in the North. Their placement geographically con-

⁴⁹ Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk XVIII, chap. 16.

⁵⁰ Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk XVIII, chap. 16.

⁵¹ Within this article, I have chosen not to discuss the characterization of the northern indigenous people, the Sami, on these maps. For a summary of how Sami were depicted in early modern literature, see Meriot, ‘The Saami Peoples’; for a more critical look at the Sami depictions in Olaus Magnus, see Balzamo, ‘The Geopolitical Laplander’.

fers status and character. This belongingness is linked to the animal's natural biogeography, that is, the climatic and vegetation zones where it lives, but it is also shaped by human arguments. Animals that were not exclusively northern could still be placed as northern emblems on maps if their ties to the North were explained. As the geography of Scandinavia became more detailed on maps, animals were relegated to the North of North as a wild zone.

The posting of animals on early modern maps were generally based on biogeographical reality, but the act of placing the animals also carried meaning. The narratives around the maps, both elements within the map proper and in the paramap, made claims about the North based on its fauna. The North was a wild and dangerous place with polar bears and wolverines, while at the same time it was domesticated and filled with useful animals such as reindeer and otters. Northern Nature's cornucopia was a multifaceted gift from God of both wonder and utility.

The northern reaches of Europe provided challenging geographies and climates for animal and human alike in the premodern world, just as they do still today. The animals that persist in these challenges became examples for the mapmakers of the wonders of creation and the uniqueness of the North. Placing the creatures on the maps — making them belong in northern places more so than others — was, as Olaus Magnus put it so eloquently,

ea potissimum causa, vt pius inspector agnoscant, quam admirabilis excessi creatoris affectus, & amor est in omnibus creaturis suis, vbique terrarum suæ dispositioni subjectis, maxime in frigidissimo climate Septentrionalis plagæ (concessa naturali sagacitate) conservandis: scilicet vt vndique conclusa nivibus, & gelu tellure, pastum prohibente, nedum vivere, sed & genus producere, atque alere possint, & inter asperrima elementa illæ sæ manere. Sobrie tamen de vniuscujusque animantis genere, vbicunque vivat, est sentiendum: quia invariabilis naturæ lex ita statuit, vt nullibi melius, quam vbi productum sit, persistere possit.

(principally to enable the pious reader to realize the marvellous tenderness and affection of our heavenly Creator for all His creatures, which are everywhere in the world subject to His direction, especially those which, with the natural shrewdness granted to them, must preserve themselves in the very cold climate of the northern region. In other words, when the ground is totally sealed off by snow and frost and grazing is impossible, they manage not only to survive but also to produce and feed young of their kind, remaining unharmed during the harshest weather. One must, however, prudently observe the habitat and nature of each breed, for an invariable law of Nature has laid it down that it can continue its existence nowhere better than the place where it was born).⁵²

⁵² Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk XVII, Preface.

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MAKING SAMI OF THE SCOTS: BRITAIN'S AND SCANDINAVIA'S NEAR NORTHS

Jeremy DeAngelo

Europe's association of evil with the North is long and ancient, and can be found in much of its extant literature throughout its history.¹ Due to the pervasiveness of this belief, there could not help but be consequences for those who populated the continent's North. Medieval and early modern literature consistently characterized northerners as barbaric, malicious, and unchristian in fitting with their cold, inhospitable environment. Yet northerliness is a relative concept, capable of being wielded by those who themselves embody the negative associations of the North to more southerly groups. This piece examines this phenomenon within two interconnected dynamics—that between the Norse and the *Finnar* in the Middle Ages into the early modern era, and that between the Scots and the English around the same time, particularly in the reign of James VI (James I of England). In both cases, we can see the attempt to identify another population as northern, in part to avoid the complications attendant to the label. In particular, the North's connotations of paganism and witchcraft gave those wishing to associate themselves with the South — the

¹ For short accounts of this tradition, see Barraclough, Cudmore, and Donecker, 'Der übernatürliche Norden'; and Fjågesund, *The Dream of the North*, pp. 33–43. You can also see this theme touched upon in this volume in the works by Simonsen and Barbierato and Wangel-felt Ström.

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Norse, the English, and the Lowland Scots — the opportunity to set themselves apart at the expense of their neighbours. Indeed, as we shall see, it was the fear of being associated with their near Norths which inspired the negative depiction of northern populations at this time.

As would be expected, no European places were more associated with the North and its problems as were Scandinavia and Iceland, those areas truly most northerly both in geography and climate. Those who settled the region also received this tradition, but their familiarity with life in the environment allowed them to refine and modify it according to local realities to create a more specific stereotype of the North. Much of what was added was derived from Norse dealings with the other major ethnic group in Scandinavia, the *Finnar* — the medieval ancestors of the Sami and Finns. The lifestyles of these populations, which in large part herded reindeer rather than cultivated crops and generally still practised their indigenous religion, are sensationalized in the medieval sagas. They are depicted as living hand-to-mouth yet able to thrive in hostile conditions through heathen rites that granted them dominion over the elements. Both their pastoralism and their supernatural abilities associated them with their environment to such an extent that its own qualities came to be reflected in their persons: cold, harsh, inimical to Christianity and civilization, and inherently opposed to the Norse.²

In the Middle Ages, this particular permutation of north-prejudice remained confined to the Norse world. However, beginning in the sixteenth century, several events led to an increased interest in Scandinavia in southern Europe and a wider airing of the stereotypes associated with the *Finnar*. Particularly influential was the *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (The Description of the Peoples of the North), published in 1555 by Olaus Magnus, a Swedish Catholic churchman in exile. Olaus's estrangement from his country occurred when Sweden adopted Lutheranism while he was travelling to Rome to secure the approval of his brother Johannes as the archbishop of Uppsala. While no doubt disastrous to them, their plight placed two native authorities on northern antiquities in the heart of humanist Europe and in close proximity to those who might have need of their expertise. Olaus's work, in particular, devoted an entire chapter to 'sylvestrium Pagani' (pagans of the wild regions)—the Sami

² Other discussions of the *Finnar* in the sagas include Lindow, 'Supernatural Others and Ethnic Others'; Mundal, 'The Perception of the Saamis'; Pálsson, *Úr landnordri*; Cardew, "Mannfögnuour er Oss at Smjöri tessu"; Lindow, 'Cultures in Contact'; and DeAngelo, 'The North and the Depiction of the *Finnar*'.

and the Finns.³ By all accounts, Olaus was drawing upon personal experience in his depiction of these people, who occupy the transitional conceptual space between the medieval *Finnar* and the distinct contemporary populations of today.⁴ Nevertheless, much of what he recorded were traditional stories of Finnish and Sami wizards rather than accurate ethnographical information. One of the *Historia's* most influential passages is also an excellent example of how Olaus promulgated the old stereotypes of the North:

Solebant aliquando Finni, inter caeteros gentilitatis errores, negotiatoribus in eorum littoribus contraria ventorum tempestate impeditis, ventum venalem exhibere, mercedeque oblata, tres nodos magicos non cassioticos loro constrictos eisdem reddere, eo servato moderamine, ut ubi primum dissolverint, ventos haberent placidos; ubi alterum, vehementiores; at ubi tertium laxaverint, ita saevas tempestates se passuros, ut nec oculo extra proram in evitandis scopulis, nec pede in navi ad vela deprimenda, aut in puppi pro clavo dirigendo, integris viribus potirentur.⁵

(Among other pagan errors, the Finns sometimes are accustomed to provide winds for sale to merchants stranded on their shores by adverse windy weather, and, given payment, give them in return three magic unbreakable knots tied to a band. This is how what they have is to be used: when they would undo the first, they would have calm winds; when the second, more forceful; but when they would release the third, they then would suffer violent storms that with their whole strength they could maintain no eye to watch for rocks beyond the prow, nor foot for lowering the sail into the vessel, nor at the helm in the stern to steer.)

Elsewhere in the work Olaus discusses how some of the people in the area had weaponized such magic, allowing them to become greatly feared pirates. The ability of the *Finnar* to conjure storms and to use them to their advantage was a common trope in the sagas,⁶ so it is safe to say that this was not something Olaus observed himself but rather a bit of folklore he was passing along. Nevertheless, the dominion over the winds supposedly enjoyed by the Sami

³ Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk IV. For the English, see Olaus Magnus, *Description of the Northern Peoples*, ed. by Peter Foote, I, 193.

⁴ As Ernest J. Moyné notes, Olaus defines *Finn* and *Lapp* geographically, not culturally. He makes no distinction in culture between the two, just as is the case with the Old Norse understanding of the *Finnar*. See Moyné, *Raising the Wind*, p. 20.

⁵ Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk III, chap. 16. Abbreviations in the original have been expanded.

⁶ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, I, 135 and II, 11; *Ketils saga hængs*, p. 160; *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*, pp. 132–37; and *Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappá hans*, pp. 44–46.

and Finns would prove to be one of their most enduring qualities in the popular imagination, and was seemingly impervious to scepticism. Even Johannes Scheffer, who had extensive experience with the Sami and whose expedition and subsequent work, *Lapponia*, were in part conceived to give a more accurate view of these people, repeats stories of them selling winds and exerting control over the weather.⁷

To some degree the northern stereotypes which Olaus ascribed to the Sami and Finns affected the perceptions of all northern people. In the sagas, the depiction of the *Finnar* serves to place them in the position of the exotic Other relative to Norse conventionality. For this reason, the attributes of the *Finnar* were readily transferrable to any non-conforming person or population that the writers of the sagas sought to vilify — against the inhabitants of North America,⁸ against rebellious provinces,⁹ and especially against practitioners of witchcraft both in Scandinavia and in Iceland.¹⁰ Whether the depiction of magical Sami and Finns found in Olaus had a similar influence on the broader characterization of witchcraft-users in the early modern era is less apparent. It is true that the period in which awareness of the Sami and Finns rose in Europe corresponds with the witch craze in the continent, and that in Central Europe particularly the ability of witches to alter the weather was of special concern, there is no definitive indication that the two are related. Other explanations have been posited for the concern over the weather in this time period,¹¹ and it may be sufficient to suggest that talk of Sami sorcery exacerbated more local suspicions.

However, in other contexts, proximity to the Sami and Finns was enough to tar other people with the same brush, and, when convenient, southerners seized upon northerly stereotypes and used them for their own propagandistic needs. This was especially apparent during the Thirty Years' War. When Sweden's king Gustavus Adolphus entered the fray in 1630 in support of the Protestant cause, many Southern Europeans on both sides of the conflict saw the barbaric North sweeping down upon them, and in doing so characterized the Swedish forces with the most lurid tales available to them. Gustavus employed Finns but no Sami, yet the presence of both and their supposed powers over the weather were

⁷ Scheffer, *Lapponia*, pp. 45 and 58.

⁸ Sayers, 'Psychological Warfare in Vinland', p. 258.

⁹ DeAngelo, 'The North and the Depiction of the Finnar', pp. 265–66.

¹⁰ *Laxdæla saga*, pp. 99 and 109; and *Vatnsdæla saga*, pp. 70 and 75.

¹¹ See, for example, Behringer, 'Weather, Hunger, and Fear'.



Figure 10.1: Broadsheet illustration of the allies of the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus. Stadtbibliothek (StB) Ulm, Einblatt 231. Reproduced with permission from StB Ulm.

blamed for the defeat of Gustavus's adversaries.¹² That the characteristics once restricted to the *Finnar* now were applied less discriminately to the whole of Gustavus's army can be seen in the way that the Scots came to be lumped in with them in the propaganda of the day. Gustavus employed mercenary regiments, and, of these, the Scottish contingents were the earliest and distinguished themselves the most.¹³ Their presence on the battlefield, and the northerliness of their land, placed them in the minds of the opposition as among the ranks of Swedish army's northern hordes. Most outstanding is an illustration in the counter-reformation tract MS Stadt Ulm Stadtbibliothek, E 231 (Figure 10.1), which depicts Gustavus's supposed northern allies — a Sami, a Livonian, and a Scot — in a highly fantastical and prejudicial light.¹⁴ There is much that is incorrect about the rendering — the reindeer the Livonian is riding, for example, is not naturalistic but instead comes from the tradition described in this volume by Dolly Jørgenson — but the depiction of these soldiers is meant to be more suggestive than accurate. In the rudeness of their dress and in the leaves which decorate their attire, all three conform to the 'wild man' trope common to late medieval and early modern European literature. The Sami, barefoot and eating his signifying foliage, is clearly the most barbaric of the lot, but the Scot features most prominently, clad in skins and armed to the teeth.

That the Scots could plausibly be lumped in with the Sami as examples of northern barbarism speaks to their potential suitability to the stereotype. After all, like the populations of *Finnar* in the Middle Ages, Scotland in the early modern era is frequently characterized by its association with witchcraft and friction with its southern neighbours.¹⁵ However, the actual circumstances in the period and the similarities between treatment of the Scots and treatment of the *Finnar* are more complicated than they might initially seem. First is a question of influence. Just as there is little evidence of a direct borrowing from the characterization of the *Finnar* in the more general depiction of witches in Continental Europe, there is little to suggest that medieval Norse tropes were imported to Scotland in the early modern era — with the major

¹² Moyne, *Raising the Wind*, pp. 28–30.

¹³ Fischer, *The Scots in Sweden*, pp. 74 and 88–105; and Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, II, 205–06.

¹⁴ Dunn, *The Ages of the Religious Wars*, p. 74; Williamson, 'Scots, Indians and Empire', pp. 50–52 and 55; and Rackwitz, *Travels to Terra Incognita*, pp. 56–57.

¹⁵ For a closer look at Britain's inhabitants' perception of the island's north, see the chapter by Hollis in this volume.

exception of James VI's own formative experience, which will be addressed below. In fact, if anything, it appears that influence flowed in the opposite direction, with Scottish ideas of witchcraft being introduced to Scandinavia. Liv Helene Willumsen takes as a case-study the effect of John Cunningham, a Scottish expatriate who was appointed governor of Finnmark in 1619 by King Christian IV of Denmark.¹⁶ His arrival instigated the intensification of the witch-hunt in this region, and turned the focus of its inquiry away from the prosecution of traditional Sami shamanism (Christian's initial concern¹⁷) and towards the more Continental preoccupation with demonology. There does not seem to have been any reciprocal effect upon Scotland, particularly in the attribution of weather-magic to witches. Despite some high-profile exceptions,¹⁸ weather-magic was an unusual accusation in Scotland.¹⁹ Where descriptions of witchcraft did include the ability to create storms or raise winds was primarily in the Hebrides, Shetlands, and Orkneys.²⁰ Moreover, tales of weather-magic in the Isles were not new features of their folklore. Olaus's story, for example, of witches selling winds to sailors can be found centuries earlier in Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon*, in this case attributed to the Isle of Man.²¹ These islands, along with the Scottish Highlands, were extensively settled by the Norse in the Middle Ages, and so their influence likely came to the region much earlier than it would have to other parts of Europe. There is some indication that Norse conceptions of the *Finnar* have had a direct impact upon the traditions of the islands of the North Sea,²² though at the same time we can see in the sagas people from these regions individually exhibiting weather-magic abilities.²³ This circumstance also lends credence to the belief maintained in the early modern era that the Highlands and Isles were more naturally the province

¹⁶ Willumsen, 'Exporting the Devil across the North Sea.'

¹⁷ Willumsen, *Witches of the North*, p. 259.

¹⁸ The North Berwick witches were famously accused of working the weather to assassinate James VI and Anne of Denmark, an incident that will be discussed in more detail below. There is also the case of Isobel Gowdie, who among her other fantastical admissions claims to have caused storms. However, Gowdie's confession is highly unique within Scottish witchcraft and contains many details found nowhere else, so it is hardly representative. See Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, pp. 43 and 53–55.

¹⁹ Goodare, 'Scottish Witchcraft in its European Context', p. 29.

²⁰ Bruford, 'Scottish Gaelic Witch Stories', pp. 31–33.

²¹ Higden, *Polychronicon*, II, 36 (bk I, chap. xlv).

²² Marwick, *The Folklore of Orkney and Shetland*, p. 48; and Jennings, 'The Finnfolk'.

²³ *Laxdæla saga*, pp. 99 and 109.

of witches than the Scottish Lowlands. Witch persecutions were relatively rare in the Highlands and Isles, while emigrants from these regions were more often accused of witchcraft in the Lowlands. This speaks to a difference in the understanding of witchcraft and its harm, which in part comes out of the divergent cultural traditions that each community was drawing upon — folkloric and (in part) Norse-derived in the North and demonological and more influenced by England and the Continent to the South.²⁴

Yet while there might have been real differences between the north and south of Scotland, this distinction was exaggerated by those who were invested in it. It is in this way that the prejudice against northern peoples in Britain is comparable to that in Scandinavia, though the former circumstance is a bit more complex. It is true that the Scots occupied the same geographic and conceptual space for the people of southern Britain as the *Finnar* did for the Norse. Yet in Britain there were competing ideas of where exactly to draw the boundaries of the North and who to circumscribe within it. The English would often condemn the entire nation of Scotland as cold and barbarous,²⁵ but within Scotland itself the people in the southern, English-speaking portion of the country would tar the Gaelic Highlanders with the same brush.²⁶ Like the earlier Norse, who were themselves a northern people, the English and the Lowland Scots were defining themselves favourably in opposition to populations onto whom they could plausibly pass the taint of northern barbarity.

In doing so they were revealing an old anxiety. Nicholas Howe has described how northern commentators as far back as Gildas and Bede accepted classical geographers' depiction of their regions as remote and isolated from the Christian and civilizational centres of the South, and more given to barbarism as a result.²⁷ Icelandic writers, too, characterized the world and their place in it in this way,²⁸ and they all fretted over its implications. The lands in the North Sea were dark and cold, it was reasoned, far from the ameliorating warmth of the Mediterranean and far from the salvific centres of medieval Christianity. It was incumbent, therefore, upon the representatives of these regions to demonstrate that they were not the sum of their environments, that northern popula-

²⁴ For a critical look at this generalization, see Henderson, 'Witch Hunting and Witch Belief'. See also Willumsen, *Witches of the North*, pp. 66–69.

²⁵ Rackwitz, *Travels to Terra Incognita*, pp. 22–72. This attitude persisted into later periods as well. For example, cf. McKim, "Wild Men" and "Wild Notions"

²⁶ Floyd-Wilson, 'English Epicures and Scottish Witches', p. 141.

²⁷ Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 133–37.

²⁸ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, I, 10.

tions could be full participants in and worthwhile contributors to Christian civilization. This is a concern that continued in the region up through the early modern period, as John Milton assures his audience in *Areopagitica* that his 'natural endowments' were 'haply not the worst for two and fifty degrees of northern latitude'.²⁹ All these writers, from the advent of the Middle Ages all the way up to the Restoration, in Britain and the larger Norse world, were concerned with their association with the North and how this might negatively affect the reception of themselves and their ideas by a wider European audience.

One way to allay suspicion was to contrast oneself positively to another, even more northerly population. As Howe observes: 'Even the north, it would seem, needs to demonize its own form of the north.'³⁰ This was essentially the strategy of the saga writers, and it also goes far in explaining the treatment of the Highlanders and/or the Scots. The bid of the English and the Lowland Scots was essentially to impress upon more southerly populations their closer resemblance to the civilized South than the barbarous North by harshly censuring the northern populations within their control. As we have seen, with the rise in attention towards the North, Scots increasingly ran the risk of being associated with other northern peoples and were depicted accordingly. Indeed, as with the story of selling winds, one can see the earlier Norse stereotypes of sorcery, hostility, and cultural poverty already operating in Scotland in the Middle Ages. The distinction can be seen as far back as John of Fordun in the fourteenth century,³¹ and was also employed by John Mair when he divided his countrymen into two types, the *Scoti sylvestres* (Scots of the forest or wild Scots) and *Scoti domestici* (householding or 'domesticated' Scots). In his opinion, only one was fit for civilization; the other, due to its northerliness, was far too violent:

In veste, cultu & moribus, reliquis puta domesticis minus honesti sunt, non tamen minus ad bellum precipites, sed multo magis; tum quia magis boreales; tum quia in montibus nati & sylvicolae pugnatiores suapte natura sunt.³²

(In clothes, culture, and values, consider [the wild Scots] less worthy than the settled remainder. However, they are not less quick to fight, but much more so. Consequently, because they are more northern, [and] because they are born in the mountains and live in the forests, they are by their nature more belligerent.)

²⁹ Milton, *Areopagitica*, *Paradise Lost*, p. 341.

³⁰ Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 135.

³¹ John of Fordun, *Chronica gentis Scotorum*, I, 42.

³² John Major, *Historia majoris Britanniae*, bk I, fol. XVI (chap. 8). Abbreviations in the original have been expanded. On this quotation, see Williamson, 'Scots, Indians and Empire', p. 59.

That the climate of the North had some effect on the disposition of a person or a race was an ancient idea, but one that remained quite prevalent in early modern Britain.³³ The effect of climate on the bodily humours had influenced the Norse conception of northerly peoples,³⁴ and it did the same in characterizations of the Scots.

The attempt to foist negative attributes onto a northerly population can be seen most clearly in the activities of James VI of Scotland. James, of course, is famous for the zeal in which he pursued suspected witches,³⁵ and in his actions and writing he perpetuated the stereotype of the Scot as a northern heathen to some degree. In his *Daemonologie*, he ties Scotland to the Scandinavian Far North by singling both out for the high prevalence of witchcraft in 'such wild partes of the worlde, as Lap-land and Fin-land, or in our North Iles of Orknay and Schet-land.'³⁶ The king's reference here to witchcraft in the north of both Scandinavia and Scotland is unusual, but it is likely connected to his personal experience with what he believed to be sorcery. In the autumn of 1589 his wedding to Anne of Denmark was delayed due to hair-raising weather. Anne had attempted to cross the North Sea to Scotland but had to turn back due to storms, so James went to her and stayed over the winter at the Danish Court. When he and his bride sailed to Scotland in the spring, their passage was not smooth, and one of their attendant ships was lost in the gale. In Copenhagen, this run of bad weather was blamed on witches, and trials followed. The Scots followed suit. Christina Larner attributes the inspiration for James's Scottish witch-hunts to this personal event and to his exposure to contemporary Danish practice over that winter.³⁷ As such, it represents an unusually clear chain of transmission of traditional Norse beliefs concerning elemental magic between the Danes and the Scots. The origin of James's suspicions may be why the subsequent trials in North Berwick are one of the few Scottish witch-hunts that focused on weather-magic as opposed to other types of *maleficium*.

James's marriage and its consequences are sometimes credited with introducing the Continental discipline of demonology to what was previously an indig-

³³ Floyd-Wilson, 'English Epicures and Scottish Witches', pp. 134–35 and 140. See also the work by Langum in this present volume.

³⁴ DeAngelo, 'The North and the Depiction of the *Finnar*', pp. 269–70.

³⁵ For the fullest account of James's efforts, including primary documents, see Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*.

³⁶ James VI, *Daemonologie*, p. 69.

³⁷ Larner, 'James VI and I and Witchcraft', pp. 80–81. As a counterpoint, see Maxwell-Stuart, 'The Fear of the King is Death'.

enous Scottish witch-hunting tradition. However, Brian P. Levack disputes this assertion and instead argues that the ‘politicization of witchcraft was James’s main contribution to Scottish witch-hunting.’³⁸ Levack is speaking of the identification of witchcraft with treason and his use of the North Berwick trials as a cudgel against his enemies. However, there was a broader political dimension to James’s efforts against witchcraft, in which his identification, as we have seen, of witchcraft with the North and with the north of his realm also suited his political needs. That the king should single out the northern islands specifically in his *Daemonologie* would be in accord with his prejudices. Royal pronouncements repeatedly excoriated those in Scotland’s North — particularly those in the Isles — as ‘barbarous and detestable’ (at one point James even expresses concern for travellers who find themselves trapped in this hostile territory ‘be contrarious winds’).³⁹ Although these subjects were often in revolt, Arthur H. Williamson argues that James’s animus towards the Highlanders and Islanders stemmed from anxiety over ‘social identity’ more than anything else.⁴⁰ He, like many Scots, was well aware that the insults he hurled at the northern Scots were applied elsewhere to the Scottish people as a whole, and were informed just as his were by prevailing prejudices against the North. Hector Boece, in the century before, addressed the prejudice head-on in his history of the Scots: ‘Thay auctoritis is na worth, that sayis all peple far fra the sonne ar barbour and miserable.’⁴¹ However, while Boece cast traditional Highland culture as the natural and honourable state of these people,⁴² in James’s day the king’s policy was to cajole or force them into conformity with the more anglicized Lowlands. Much of James’s exasperation with the Highlanders and Islanders stemmed from their repeated, violent resistance to the plantations he founded there, peopled with Lowland Scots, with the intention of reforming their culture.⁴³ When they rebelled, royal pronouncements promised that they would be ‘reduced to “civilitie”’.⁴⁴ That ‘civilizing’ them should also ‘reduce’ them is an irony that the king perhaps did not realize.

³⁸ Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, p. 41.

³⁹ *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, VII, 84, 88–89, 204 and 525. More general opprobrium can be found in VI, 130, 255, 420; VII, 525; and VIII, 59–61, 72, 93–94, 502, 737, and 766–67.

⁴⁰ Williamson, ‘Scots, Indians and Empire’, p. 64.

⁴¹ Boece, *The History and Chronicles of Scotland*, I, p. lii.

⁴² Boece, *The History and Chronicles of Scotland*, I, pp. liv–lxii.

⁴³ Armitage, ‘Making the Empire British’, p. 43.

⁴⁴ *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, VIII, 93 and 766. Why there should be quotation marks around ‘civilitie’ is an intriguing question for which I have no answer.

James was not the first to express anxiety over his people's northern unruliness, but he was uniquely sensitive to charges of incivility among the Scots, since as the heir — and, eventually, occupant — of both the Scottish and English thrones he was at pains to demonstrate to his English subjects their compatibility with their northern neighbours. James's hope, and intent, was to forge a new identity — not Scottish or English but British.⁴⁵ In practice, this led to his unforgiving treatment of the recalcitrant Highlanders and Islanders. As James said, if he could 'have removit frome amange his subjectis of the cuntrey of Scotland all sic cuustomis, faschiouns and behaviouris as did in ony wayis smell of barbaritie and sevegnis, and to have reducit thair haille cariage and behaviouris to that comeliness and decencie that is requirit in a civill and weill governit pepill', then he should correct 'the reproch of the haille natioun'.⁴⁶ Self-consciousness, and a desire for his kingdom and his people to live up to the standards set by an unforgiving audience to the South, are what animated James's policies towards both witches and Highlanders and Islanders in Scotland, since both conformed to stereotypes about the uncivilized North.

The results of James's efforts were mixed. England's subsequent dealings with Scotland, as well as the Lowlands' dealings with the Highlands, would not resolve themselves as neatly as James would have wanted, although, in the long term, both political union and a recognition of a common 'Britishness' would be a reality. James's reign, however, was bracketed by the two formative events that introduced the Far North and its stereotypes to the rest of Europe: the publication of Olaus Magnus's *Historia* and the Swedish entry into the Thirty Years' War. Between these two events, we see that, despite James's efforts in Britain, throughout the rest of Europe the Scots came to be associated ever more closely with the same stereotypes long ascribed to the *Finnar* — with savagery, a lack of civilization, and incompatibility with proper Christianity. It is here that we see the relativism of geography exert itself again, for while Britons may recognize degrees of difference among the peoples of their island, those as unfamiliar with it as they are with Scandinavia see only an undifferentiated northern mass.⁴⁷ Europeans struggled against their place in the world, trying to make themselves seem southern through devices created in the northern regions of their continent. The North, therefore, came to define them all, as they worked all the harder to escape its reach.

⁴⁵ Armitage, 'Making the Empire British', pp. 44–45; and Floyd-Wilson, 'English Epicures and Scottish Witches', p. 141.

⁴⁶ *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, vi, 594.

⁴⁷ For Continental commentators, for example, the distinction between the English and Scots was academic. Floyd-Wilson, 'English Epicures and Scottish Witches', p. 140.

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THE CONTOURS OF THE NORTH? BRITISH MOUNTAINS AND NORTHERN PEOPLES, 1600–1750

Dawn Hollis

The modern perception of the division between North and South in the British Isles is a confused and sometimes fraught one. Some might say that for twenty-first-century southerners, ‘North’ begins somewhere around Birmingham, where strange accents, sprawling industrial cities, and a generally more impoverished way of life begins. ‘The North’ is a place to visit, perhaps for its great natural beauty, but too far from the affluent cultural magnet of London to be a place to settle permanently. And then there is Scotland, a place so far north that customary usage of (and road signs featuring) the phrase ‘the North’ fail to include it. In Scotland accents are even less intelligible than in northern England, and people wear strange clothes, eat strange foods, and play instruments which sound somewhat akin to a cat being strangled. In return, people in the north perceive the south as soft, over-privileged, and, in the case of Scots, so very different in all the ways that matter that in 2014, 45 per cent of the population voted to break away from it entirely.¹

¹ For a humorous consideration of contemporary southern/northern English stereotypes, see Maconie, *Pies and Prejudice*. Jewell, *The North-South Divide* and Baker and Billinge, *Geographies of England*, set these discourses of difference within broader historical contexts. For a sociological study of Anglo-Scottish stereotypes, see Lindsay, ‘The Uses and Abuses of National Stereotypes’.

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These are, of course, stereotypes, even prejudices. However, the idea of North — as a mental construct as much as anything else — is often made up of stereotypes, which not even physically visiting the site identified as North will shift. This chapter will propose that North is always constructed, whether positively or negatively, as Other to the person or group perceiving it. It will argue that, in the case of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century travellers' accounts, the 'Otherness' of Scotland was constructed in more extreme and more negative ways than that of northern England. The nordicity of the two places was, however, rooted in a characteristic common to both: a harsh, rugged landscape, which shaped the character and temperament of the people who inhabited it in a variety of ways.

The following discussion will elucidate these commonalities and differences between the grammar of the North as applied to Scotland and northern England in the latter centuries of the early modern period. In order to do so, it will first present a working definition of the idea of North as Other, along with a brief overview of the concept of a 'grammar of North'. Visions of Scotland and northern England as North will then be discussed separately, whilst drawing upon a common set of themes. These include the location of 'Northernness' in each area; the distinction drawn between urban and rural spaces in perceptions of qualities associated with the North; and depictions of people, the landscape they inhabited, and the connections between them. It will conclude by comparing the nature of travellers' reactions to Scotland and northern England as spaces they perceived to be physically and symbolically North.

What Is North?

Before considering the historical specificities of boreal visions of Scotland and northern England in the early modern period, it is necessary to attempt to answer one very important question: what is North? There is a glib response to that, of course — that it is a point on the compass — but the very existence of this volume testifies that the issue is rather more complicated. 'North', 'the North', and 'visions of the North' are all concepts which are located at the contradictory, conflicting intersection of the actual and the metaphorical, as has been discussed in the introduction to this volume. This essay assumes three key characteristics of North; that it is an idea, that it is a physical reality, and that it is always Other. It is where these three meet and combine that 'visions of the North' can be uncovered.

Peter Davidson's lucent, poetic *The Idea of North* captures the mentally constructed quality of North, drawing together as he does the various artworks,

historical texts, poems, novels, and films which have shaped visions of the North in both the past and present.² The North as an idea can be and has been enchanting, frightening, tempting, or awe-inspiring. However, for all its metaphorical power, North is also a physical reality. It is something between a direction, a place, and a sense of distance. North is an idea, a metaphor, but it is one which is *physically located*, albeit in different places for different people. This is why, in the trio of descriptors immediately above, 'a sense of distance' is the most crucial. To travel northward is not always the same as to go north, or to go to *the* north (a place as apparently definite as the article which precedes it). One can travel northwards and still be in the south, or at least sufficiently close to an individual's point of origin in both mental and physical terms to fail to qualify as being in the *place* of north, rather than just being located in the direction of it. This essay seeks to uncover at what point a sense of distance (whether physical or mental) aligned with a cardinal direction to cause past individuals to identify a place within the British Isles as truly 'North'.

North is also Other. I would argue that it is a sense of Otherness, as experienced or perceived by an individual or group of people, which separates North from a place that happens to be in a northerly direction; which creates mental or emotional distance. North contains a type of people, a type of landscape, and a host of ways and customs that are Other to the person perceiving it, and it is this which gives it the essential quality of Northerliness. This Otherness can be either positive or negative (or simply strange), thus allowing for conflicting characteristics to co-exist within a single vision of North. But then, might North just as well be East, another metaphorical and physical location which is often perceived and represented as Other? To some extent, the answer is yes: as this essay will argue, some ways in which Scotland was Othered by travelers closely resemble the rhetoric applied to 'Eastern' cultures centuries later.³ However, this essay will also utilize the idea of the 'grammar of the north' to identify characteristics of Otherness which, by virtue of both their rootedness in a physical reality, and of repeated metaphorical application, belong specifically to the North, and to no other cardinal point.

The concept of the 'grammar of North' was first put forward by Daniel Chartier. This 'grammar' is an ever-expanding and self-redefining list of attributes, figures, and characteristics typically equated with North, which can then be used to identify further texts (featuring any of the already-identified attrib-

² Davidson, *The Idea of North*.

³ Said, *Orientalism*.

utes of North) within which to locate additional descriptors for the grammar.⁴ This approach — when dealing with a term as malleable and porous as that of ‘North’ — seems to be a reasonable one, as it respects the inevitable inter-relationship between different visions of the North whilst also allowing for variations on the theme to occur in individual texts or sets of texts. This essay will adopt and adapt this idea, pointing out that, like any grammar, the grammar of north changes depending upon the specific context in which it is being applied — although, in this case, the context is not necessarily linguistic but (relatively speaking) geographical. Thus, this essay asks: what does the ‘grammar of the English North’, as a collection of characteristics that can be traced through a variety of mid-seventeenth- to mid-eighteenth-century texts, look like, and how does it differ from the ‘grammar of Scotland as North’?

The grammar of North will come into dialogue with the concept of North as Other, by virtue of both being intersectional concepts, particularly as demonstrated in the examples explored in this essay. Poverty, although part of the early modern grammar of the North, was equally ‘Other’, whether North or South, when encountered by a wealthy traveller. Moreover, any country foreign to an individual is in some way Other, and so the Northern Otherness of Scotland intermingled with its Scottish Otherness. These threads are so entangled that it is almost impossible to unravel them, but the attempt to do so invites questions which are at the heart of this essay. Was a ‘grammar of Scotland’ separate to, or inherent in a grammar of, Scotland as North? Was Scotland, by dint of its status as a separate country, disproportionately more ‘Northern’ than the extra degrees of latitude between it and areas of England just south of the national border would physically suggest?

Visions of Northern England

The first key question to ask is: where in England did the South end and the North begin? The inevitable answer is that it was relative — not all travellers identified a specific beginning to the North, and those who did differed in their assessment of the invisible line which divided England. The most explicit geographical definition of the North came from Daniel Defoe in the early eighteenth century. His three-volume *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*

⁴ Chartier, ‘Towards a Grammar of the Idea of North’, pp. 43–46. See also the discussion of Northern grammar and othering in Jørgensen and Langum, ‘Envisioning North from a Pre-modern Perspective’, in this volume.

treated the country in a series of 'circuits', ostensibly representing journeys which he had made in preparing to write his work. These circuits had clearly delineated boundaries which he refused to cross, whether by foot or by word. The Midland circuit lay 'between the *Thames* and the *Trent*', and it was the *Trent* which marked the line beyond which northern England stood.⁵ Near Staffordshire, Defoe paused and commented that he was 'now at the utmost Extent of my Limits for this Circuit [...] [at] the very banks of the *Trent*, which I am not to pass'.⁶ It should be noted that the *Trent* does not describe a horizontal line across the country: at its northernmost point it adds its tribute, along with the Ouse, to form the River Humber, not far from the Mouth of Humber, a little south (in terms of latitude) of Leeds. Its southernmost point is not far below Burton-Upon-Trent, and — to follow its course in reverse — it then hooks northwards towards its source in the Staffordshire moorlands. Therefore, in Defoe's vision of the North–South line, Lincolnshire is in the South whilst Derbyshire and most of Nottinghamshire, on the same latitude, are in the North. The North–South line, for Defoe, was not straight but diagonal.

However, this line — though firmly self-policed by Defoe in his own text — was not the only vision of the geographical division between North and South revealed by early modern writers. Whilst for Defoe Derbyshire (or, more specifically, the mountainous 'peak' or Peak District within it) was explicitly 'North', at least one earlier writer did not perceive it as such. For William Camden, writing in 1586, Lancashire and Cheshire belonged to the 'Northern parts' of the country, but Derbyshire merely pointed 'towards the North'.⁷ James Brome, a clergyman, specifically identified Northumberland, just south of the Scottish border, as belonging to the 'Northern Climates'.⁸ However, Richard Corbett titled as a 'Northern Journey' his account of a trail which went no further north than Nottinghamshire.⁹ For the soon-to-be bishop of Oxford, virtually any place beyond the remit of that fair city was 'North'. By and large, however, Defoe's diagonal line is as reasonable a division as any, and even those writers who do not explicitly locate the North depict many of the counties beyond

⁵ Defoe, *Tour*, II, 109.

⁶ Defoe, *Tour*, II, 120.

⁷ Camden, *Britannia*, cols 798 and 489. The earlier 1610 translation states that Derbyshire 'looketh into the North'.

⁸ Brome, *Travels*, p. 174.

⁹ Corbet, *Certain elegant poems*, pp. 2–17. Cf. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. *Richard Corbett*.

the Trent as possessing 'northerly' qualities, such as sparse population, a rugged landscape, and hardy peoples.

As Louis-Edmond Hamelin has shown, however, 'North' is about far more than mere location—one place can be metaphorically more northerly than another place barely a few miles away on the same latitude (Hamelin labels the Northness of a place as its 'polar value' or 'p-value').¹⁰ One key distinction which complicates the ability to locate North as lying above a certain latitude is that of the urban-rural divide. When considering the cities of the North in a premodern context, it is important to bear in mind that many of the more recent stereotypes regarding the urban North did not apply. George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) evokes a North–South divide which pitted the picturesque countryside of the South against the industrialization of the North, and wealth against poverty. The northern cities which he visited were (supposedly) full of poor, slovenly people, and both inhabitants and buildings were begrimed with the byproducts of the harsh northern industries. In the early modern period, however, the great cities of the North — Newcastle, York, Liverpool — were burgeoning with wealth, trade, and impressive new buildings. Within the boundaries of a city, however geographically northern, a visitor could feel almost as if they were back within the embrace of that southern enclave *par excellence*, London.

All three cities of York, Newcastle, and Liverpool drew praise for their beauty and wealth. To Camden, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, York was not just the 'second city' in all of England, it was also 'the finest in this County'.¹¹ Over a century later, James Brome would note that it was 'very deservedly reputed the second City of *England*', terming it the 'Metropolis of the County' before adding his praise for its 'mighty pleasing and delightful situation', as well as its 'stately and beautiful' buildings.¹² Likewise Newcastle struck William Brereton as 'the fairest and richest town in England, inferior for wealth and building to no city save London and Bristow [Bristol]'.¹³ Liverpool, in its turn, was described by Daniel Defoe as 'one of the wonders of *Britain* [...] a large, handsome, well built and encreasing or thriving Town'.¹⁴ However, though the wealth and splendour of the Northern cities may have

¹⁰ Chartier, 'Towards a Grammar of the Idea of North', pp. 41–43.

¹¹ Camden, *Britannia*, col. 717.

¹² Brome, *Travels*, p. 154.

¹³ Brereton, *Travels*, ed. by Hawkins, p. 85.

¹⁴ Defoe, *Tour*, III, 200.

reduced their overall 'polar value', they differed from southern cities in one important way: in their exposure to the inevitable dangers of the North.¹⁵ Thus, York was 'the Ornament and Safe-guard of the Northern Regions' — presumably those of England, for it guarded against the proximity of the potential 'rage of the Northern nations' (the latter quote referred, historically, to Danish incursions).¹⁶ Similarly Liverpool, a town without walls, was almost in need of them 'when the late Northern [Scottish] Insurrection spread down their way'. Fortunately, as Defoe notes, the Scottish Jacobites involved in the 1715 rebellion did not quite reach that great city, but the sense of what-could-have-been was still a daunting one over a decade later.¹⁷ In the town of Preston, which was taken by the Jacobites, the consequences were such that in 1727 the people 'seem[ed] to have a kind of remembrance of Things upon them still'.¹⁸ Cities and towns in the north of England were familiarly urban and opulent to their southern visitors, but the perceived threat of their Scottish neighbours hung over them, and pushed them, mentally, further North.

Once outside of the great cities, however, 'Northness' was more than simply a case of a threat hanging outside of defensive walls: it was a reality inscribed upon the landscape. For Camden, 'little Towns' typified the 'Northern parts', whilst John Ray described Northumberland as 'very thinly inhabited'.¹⁹ This lack of human habitation led to a prospect that was often perceived as bleak, or barren, particularly by visitors towards the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century. Celia Fiennes, travelling in 1698, was unimpressed by the 'Desart and Barren Rocky Hills' in Westmorland, whilst James Brome, writing in 1700, described Stanemoor, in the same country, as 'a wide, mountainous Desart'.²⁰ Defoe, who was an extensive traveller but not a particularly hardy one, was particularly scathing of the 'houling Wilderness' of the Peak District and unpleasantly struck by the 'vast extended Moor or Waste' which made up the mountain-top overlooking Chatsworth House (indeed, he thought it a true 'Wonder' that someone with the genius to build Chatsworth would ever choose to place it in such a desolate setting).²¹ The North of England

¹⁵ Chartier, 'Towards a Grammar of the Idea of North', pp. 41–43.

¹⁶ Brome, *Travels*, p. 154, and Camden, *Britannia*, col. 720, quoting William of Malmesbury.

¹⁷ Defoe, *Tour*, II, 201.

¹⁸ Defoe, *Tour*, II, 221–22.

¹⁹ Camden, *Britannia*, col. 789; Ray, *Select Remains*, pp. 180–81.

²⁰ Fiennes, *The Illustrated Journey*, p. 169, and Brome, *Travels*, p. 211.

²¹ Defoe, *Tour*, III, 44 and 70–71.

was also cold, colder than it is today: Defoe reported snow covering the mountains in the middle of August.²²

However, the landscape of northern England was not without its redeeming qualities. Richard Corbett summed up the inherent tension of rough but admirable mountainous landscapes in his poem *Iter Boreale* as he traced the route of the Trent:

Above it grew a roke, rude, steepe, and high,
Which claimes a kind of reverence from the eye.²³

Michael Drayton, in his *Poly-Olbion*, a poetic chorography of Britain, certainly noted the 'Northern Hills', but unlike Defoe a hundred years later he did not disdain them.²⁴ Throughout his text they were described in positive terms: Penigent (Pen-y-ghent), in Yorkshire, stood 'in height of all his pride', and along with other nearby mountains '*Atlas*-like [...] undertooke/To under-prop high Heaven [...]'.²⁵ The northern mountains, for Drayton, were 'brave', 'lofty', spots from which grand prospects could be taken, and equal in significance within their native landscape to the continental Alps.²⁶ They were even the alleged abode of fair mountain nymphs.²⁷ Nor did the mountains provide only aesthetic pleasure: several writers noted that although the northern landscape on the surface appeared barren, its stark soil held 'hidden treasures'.²⁸ In the North, nature maintained a balance, with 'rugged' hills encircling 'fruitful' valleys, and the mountains in various parts 'inlayed with Iron, Lead and Coals' on which the prosperity of many of the Northern towns and cities rested.²⁹ In the most extreme description, nature 'seems to have enriched it [the northern country of Cumberland] with every thing, that may any way be conducive to Health, as well as Wealth [...]'.³⁰ Like many constructions of North, the vision

²² Defoe, *Tour*, III, 91. The Little Ice Age is probably to blame for the apparently unseasonal weather experienced by Defoe. See Parker, *Global Crisis*; Fagan, *The Little Ice Age*; and White, 'The Real Little Ice Age'.

²³ Corbet, *Certain elegant poems*, p. 7.

²⁴ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, p. 127.

²⁵ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, pp. 131–32.

²⁶ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, p. 131, 141–42, 165–66.

²⁷ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, p. 142.

²⁸ Brome, *Travels*, p. 87.

²⁹ Defoe, *Tour*, III, 41, and Brome, *Travels*, pp. 95–96, 165.

³⁰ Brome, *Travels*, pp. 205–06.

of the landscape of northern England held by travellers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was one of inherent contradiction; a cold, barren, even threatening landscape nevertheless filled with great beauty and the promise of hidden treasure.

If the cities and the landscape of the north felt distinctly Other to visitors from the south, then this was doubly true of the people, who were depicted both as being indelibly tied to the rocky, wild landscape which they inhabited, and as following customs and habits which were strange, quaint, a little foolish, or all three (although their customs were by no means as alien as those of the Scots). Daniel Defoe provided several colourful depictions of individuals he encountered on his journey. He described the wife of a lead miner, living in a cave halfway up a mountain with her five children, in compelling contrast with her environs and abject poverty — a ‘comely’, polite woman, who kept her children well fed and happy on a few pennies a day.³¹ For Defoe she was an emblem of the value of happiness, to be held up to both the wasteful poor (squandering their money on drink) and the ungrateful rich as a stereotypical example of the virtuous, rural poor.³² Not far from that homely cave, Defoe and his companions chanced across ‘a most uncouth Spectacle’: a lead miner ascending from a shaft, complete with the tools of his trade and almost a hundredweight of ore.³³ To Defoe, this miner was not so much a person as a ‘subterranean Creature’, whose language was utterly unintelligible to the visiting southerners.³⁴ Defoe and his friends went on to purchase small pieces of ore from the miner as souvenirs in return for ‘two small Pieces of better Mettle, called Shillings’ — more, allegedly, than he could earn in three days toiling beneath the earth.³⁵ Later that day, resting in an alehouse, Defoe and his friends saw the same man again, attempting to ‘melt’ his windfall ‘into good *Pale Derby* [beer]’, and magnanimously bought it for him, ‘and made him keep his Money, and promise us to carry it home to his Family, which they told us lived hard by’.³⁶

Dibyesh Anand, in considering representations of the Other in a very different context — Tibet in the Western imagination during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries — identifies stereotyping strategies which often appear

³¹ Defoe, *Tour*, III, 46–49.

³² Defoe, *Tour*, III, 46–49.

³³ Defoe, *Tour*, III, 51–52.

³⁴ Defoe, *Tour*, III, 51–52.

³⁵ Defoe, *Tour*, III, 53.

³⁶ Defoe, *Tour*, III, 53.

in colonial writings about 'natives': idealization, moralization, and infantilization.³⁷ Although such a point cannot be pushed too far, it is interesting to note that, when representing interactions with natives of the North (who are so deeply embedded in their landscape as to live in caves, or to be found clambering out of the bowels of the earth), Defoe falls back on all three of these techniques. The mother in the cave is an ideal example of the contented poor, whilst the lead miner — initially described as barely human — is depicted as childlike, requiring the supercilious guidance of Defoe and his friends to prevent him wasting money his family sorely needs on the temptations of drink.

When described in generic terms, the people of the northern counties were also presented as either being shaped by or reflecting the nature of their landscapes in more general ways. In Northumberland, James Brome notes that 'as the Country is Mountainous, so the Inhabitants are generally Fierce and Hardy, participating in some measure of the nature of the Soil'.³⁸ Not only that, but the high hills and 'Northern situation' of the nearby county of Cumberland produced a sharp, clean air, free of the fogs and vapours of other (more southerly) counties, and thus a people who were 'free from strange and infectious Diseases' and who generally lived to great ages.³⁹ Harsh though the environs of the North seemed to those who visited it, its inhabitants were in some ways in harmony with it, and the harsh landscape produced a hardy, healthful people. The people of the North were also presented as having an innate ability (just like nature) to balance out the improvident aspects of their environment: Defoe remarks concerning the early snows that

here we found, as in all those Northern Countries is the Case, the People had an extraordinary Way of mixing the warm and the cold very happily together; for the store of good *Ale* which flows plentifully in the most mountainous Part of this Country, seems abundantly to make up for all the inclemencies of the Season, or difficulties of Travelling, adding also the plenty of Coals for firing, which all those Hills are full of.⁴⁰

As previously noted, nature was seen as providing compensation for the harsh landscape and weather of the North by concealing great bounty beneath its

³⁷ Anand, 'Western Colonial Representations of the Other'.

³⁸ Brome, *Travels*, p. 174.

³⁹ Brome, *Travels*, p. 209. Cf. Beaumont, *Considerations*, p. 59, for a discussion of the advantages of mountain-dwellers over inhabitants of the valley.

⁴⁰ Defoe, *Tour*, III, 91–92.

hills; so too, did the people of North create warmth and cheer, with the quality of 'liquor' only improving as a chilled southerner made his way up the country.⁴¹ Great cities set in the midst of great danger; a barren and cold landscape which held wealth and the potential for great warmth; and a hardy people who countered the chill of the local air with the quality of their brews — like all Norths, the North of England was a place of contrasting and complementing dissonances.

Scotland as North

The question of 'where was the North' with regards to Scotland rather than England is a more difficult question to answer. Throughout this period, English travellers to Scotland depicted a stark contrast between the (southern) England with which they were familiar, and the very different country in which they found themselves. As such, the answer to the question of 'where was the North?' should seemingly be 'just across the border'. However — to return to the idea of Hamelin's p-scale — a map of the 'nordicity' of Scotland would see a complex pattern of shading that would by no means straightforwardly reflect divisions of latitude. Daniel Defoe, who drew a single diagonal line across England to delineate the Midlands from the North, instead divided Scotland into quadrants, with the Western Highlands falling into one quadrant, the 'North-Land' beyond Inverness another, and both the Western and Northern Isles yet another.⁴² Moreover, certain qualities of 'North' — in particular when it came to the character of the people — were more concentrated in regions that were, geographically, further south. The cities of Scotland also provided (at least for travellers who were not writing in a self-consciously critical mode) enclaves of trade and civilization which reduced their nordicity.

Furthermore, the most southerly reaches of Scotland, the Borders, were often depicted as especially strange and alien to travellers — perhaps an example of how the Other nature of Scotland as a different country from England further enhanced its Northern status. To Celia Fiennes, they appeared so bereft of any viable hospitality that she would not even venture over them to reach Edinburgh.⁴³ Leaving Berwick, William Brereton was unhappily struck by the experience of travelling over 'the largest and vastest moors that I have ever

⁴¹ Defoe, *Tour*, III, 41.

⁴² Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, p. 198.

⁴³ Fiennes, *The Illustrated Journey*, p. 174.

seen'.⁴⁴ Daniel Defoe disdained Coldingham Moor as 'but a poor Reception for *Scotland* to give her Neighbours, who were Strangers, at their very first Entrance into her Bounds'.⁴⁵

The Borders are significant not because their landscape struck visitors as stark and sparsely inhabited — many areas of Scotland were depicted in similar ways — but because they formed a strip of far more 'nordic' landscape than that immediately to the actual North of them, the Lowlands: for beyond them 'you begin to see that *Scotland* is not all Desart; and the Low Lands, which then show themselves, give you a Prospect of a fruitful and pleasant Country'.⁴⁶ The Borders gave a first impression of Scotland which highlighted all that was cold and stark about the country. Notably, the most northerly reaches of Scotland were by contrast equated with a sense of compelling mystery and mythical promise, drawn from classical understandings. Thomas Tucker, considering the Shetland Isles, mused that they were 'thought to bee Ultima Thule [...] reputed by the ancients to be the furthest part of the world', and confirmed that they were indeed difficult to reach outside of a few short months during the summer.⁴⁷ Likewise, Daniel Defoe thought it 'No wonder' that early travellers 'talked much of their *Ultima Thule*, and that the *Elysian* Fields must lye this Way', when the long summer nights made it seem that they 'were already come to everlasting Day'.⁴⁸ The farthest North in Scotland was a place to seek out or aspire to, but the Borders were a space to move through with all haste.

Many travellers to Scotland made a visit to the capital city their main or only target. Parodical writers were scathing of Edinburgh: Anthony Weldon, perhaps the first visitor to Scotland to write a satire upon his experience, sniped that 'a city I cannot call it', whilst Thomas Kirke concluded that the same 'character' that he would give to the people of Scotland could also be applied to the capital city, namely, 'High and Dirty'.⁴⁹ However, less overtly prejudiced writers often had a positive reaction to Edinburgh, particularly regarding its central thoroughfare, known in more recent times as the Royal Mile. William Brereton deemed it 'the glory and beauty of the city' and 'the broadest, larg-

⁴⁴ Brereton, *Travels*, p. 96.

⁴⁵ Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, pp. 7–8.

⁴⁶ Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, p. 9.

⁴⁷ Tucker, *Report*, p. 37.

⁴⁸ Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, p. 206. See the essays by Sandin and Webb in this volume, on Thule in Greek and Roman thought.

⁴⁹ Weldon, 'Sir Anthony Weldon', p. 99, and Kirke, *Modern Account of Scotland*, p. 6.

est, fairest pavement' that he had ever seen.⁵⁰ Defoe confirmed that it was 'the most spacious, the longest, and best inhabited Street in *Europe*' — and that its impressively tall buildings were markedly better built than those of London, as they did not fall down on top of people as those in the English metropolis were apparently wont to do.⁵¹ Glasgow, a centre of burgeoning trade, received even firmer praise: Brereton thought it one of the prime cities in Scotland, featuring the 'Fairest bridges'; John Ray thought it 'fair, large, and well-built', somewhat like Oxford; and Defoe termed it 'the cleanest and beautifullest, and best built City in *Britain*, *London* excepted' (of course).⁵² Richard Franck, an angler with a fervent taste for a literary turn of phrase, went so far as to say that it had 'a smell of my Native Country'.⁵³ Just as in the North of England, cities in Scotland were more familiar, and less 'northerly', to southern travellers than the wider environs in which they were set.

What, then, were those environs like? The landscape of Scotland was, in some respects, described in similar terms to that of northern England: it featured 'many steep and high hills', which were described in both negative and positive terms (generally following the same pattern as in England with more positive descriptions belonging to the earlier texts).⁵⁴ For example, Richard Franck, in 1635, waxed poetic over the 'lofty domineering hills' and 'the gilded Highlands', whilst James Brome in 1700 described (with a hint of irony) a journey across hills as an expedition through 'Territorys of Famine' which left him and his companions visibly wasted.⁵⁵ Daniel Defoe, later in the eighteenth century, went the furthest in his depiction of 'black and frightful' hills near Stirling.⁵⁶ However, unlike the harsh but fruitful hills of northern England, Scotland was barren and sparse, with a particularly notable — and apparently unsettling — lack of trees.⁵⁷ To the most unimpressed of observers, Scotland was 'but one large waste, surrounded with the Sea': to others, it promised a

⁵⁰ Brereton, *Travels*, pp. 101–02.

⁵¹ Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, pp. 33–34.

⁵² Brereton, *Travels*, pp. 115–16; Ray, *Select Remains*, pp. 202–03; Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, p. 83. For Glasgow trade, see Tucker, *Report*, p. 38.

⁵³ Franck, *Northern Memoirs*, pp. 90–91.

⁵⁴ Brereton, *Travels*, pp. 122–23.

⁵⁵ Franck, *Northern Memoirs*; Brome, *Travels*, p. 204.

⁵⁶ Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, p. 95.

⁵⁷ See Kirke, *Modern Account of Scotland*, p. 3; Brereton, *Travels*, p. 97; Weldon, 'Sir Anthony Weldon', p. 97, for the lack of trees in Scotland.

certain level of natural fecundity, but which its lazy inhabitants showed no interest in taking advantage of.⁵⁸ Its mountains were also almost always covered in snow — although areas near the coast were reported as being generally more temperate than the ‘southerly Climates’ due to the ‘nearness of the Sea.’⁵⁹ For the most part, travellers’ depictions of the landscape and environment of Scotland echoed those of the north of England, but with the crucial caveat that it lacked the redeeming quality of the natural treasures of the English hills.

The people of Scotland were, by and large, described in similarly unflattering terms. Thomas Kirke went so far as to claim that the original inhabitants of Scotland ‘were some Straglers of the fallen Angels’, but, however outrageous his satire was, it captured the tone of many more negative visions of the Scottish people during this period. They were depicted as dirty, with the apparently common custom of women washing clothes in a large tub by hitching up their skirts and then stamping on the clothes in the water attracting especial disgust.⁶⁰ It is evident that the Scottish palate at the time must have been very different from that of the English: many writers commented upon the quality of the food, with several of them interpreting the (to them) strange taste of the meat as a sign that it had been allowed to go bad.⁶¹ The courts of justice in Edinburgh were apparently rife with rudeness and disorder: particularly in the more northern parts there was much poverty; the people were too lazy for trade, and the ‘Natives in this Northern Latitude’ were ‘addicted to Idleness and Nastiness.’⁶²

And then there were respects in which the Scottish people and their customs were simply strange, thus drawing comment if not critique from southern travellers. One key difference was that of religion; most of Scotland was Presbyterian and strongly anti-Episcopal when many of these journeys were made. Weldon and Kirke, unsurprisingly, depicted Scottish religious practice as improper or even areligious, but for the most part (excepting a small corner of

⁵⁸ Kirke, *Modern Account of Scotland*, p. 4; Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, pp. 201–02.

⁵⁹ Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, p. 208.

⁶⁰ Weldon, ‘Sir Anthony Weldon’, p. 97; Kirke, *Modern Account of Scotland*, p. 4; Brereton, *Travels*, pp. 97, 102–03. See also the portrayal of the Scots discussed in DeAngelo, ‘Making Sami of the Scots’, this volume.

⁶¹ Brereton, *Travels*, p. 105; Kirke, *Modern Account of Scotland*, pp. 14–15; and Fiennes, *The Illustrated Journey*, pp. 173–74.

⁶² For disorder in the courts, see Brereton, *Travels*, p. 100; for poverty, see Tucker, *Report*, pp. 5–6, and Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, p. 69; for lack of trade due to laziness, see Tucker, *Report*, p. 24; quote from Franck, *Northern Memoirs*, p. 85.

the far northern Highlands, which Defoe reported was practically still pagan) Scottish religious practice, and the spirituality of the Scottish people, was deemed to be serious, sober, and generally more obedient to Church authority than that of their English kin.⁶³ Currency, language, and even the measurement of a mile was different in Scotland, with the latter causing considerable confusion (Brereton was told that he was 'three bonnie mile[s]' from his destination some twenty English miles before), and the issue of language so intractable in some Highland areas that travellers were forced to speak French to successfully converse with the locals.⁶⁴ However, several accounts made reference to Scottish hospitality almost as a by-word for generosity. Taylor the Water-Poet, travelling through Scotland on a wager which forbade him from spending any money, praised the unerring hospitality of 'worthy housekeepers'.⁶⁵ Even Thomas Kirke could not deny that 'the Nobility shew themselves very great before Strangers', though he added the disapproving caveat that 'their way of shewing you'r Welcome, [is] by making you Drunk [...]'.⁶⁶ Kind or drunken hospitality aside, for the most part the customs of the Scottish people were Other to visitors from the south — and often construed in negative terms.

Just as in northern England, the people of Scotland, especially Highlanders, were depicted as being closely related to the landscape which they inhabited. In the north-west Highlands, Thomas Tucker — a revenue collector not much given to poetic descriptions — wrote that it was 'a countrey stored with cattell, craggie hills, and rockes, and planted with the antient Scotts or wilde Irish'.⁶⁷ The Highlanders were depicted as quite literally growing out of the hills and rocks which surrounded them. They were also eminently suited to their environment: beyond Lochaber the country was 'full of hideous desart Mountains and unpassable, except to the *Highlanders* who possess the Precipices'.⁶⁸ This capacity to move through the mountains more easily than southern folk was

⁶³ Weldon, 'Sir Anthony Weldon', p. 101; Kirke, *Modern Account of Scotland*, pp. 8–10; Defoe, *Tour*, III, regarding the Burgh of Tain, second pagination, p. 214; Brereton, *Travels*, pp. 106–08; Ray, *Select Remains*, p. 208.

⁶⁴ For currency, see Ray, *Select Remains*, pp. 209–10; for language, see Kirke, *Modern Account of Scotland*, pp. 13–14; and for speaking French, see Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, p. 214; for miles, see Brereton, *Travels*, p. 97, and Fiennes, *The Illustrated Journey*, p. 174.

⁶⁵ John Taylor, 'Taylor, the Water-Poet', pp. 127–28.

⁶⁶ Kirke, *Modern Account of Scotland*, p. 16.

⁶⁷ Tucker, *Report*, pp. 37–38.

⁶⁸ Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, pp. 216.

used, according to Defoe, as a way for robbers to escape capture.⁶⁹ In considering the Grampian mountains, Defoe noted that 'as is the Country, so are the Inhabitants, a fierce fighting and furious Kind of Men' with great 'Vigour and Spirit'. However, he also argued that in recent years, whilst the 'mountains [were] as wild and desolate as ever', the Highlanders had become more civilized, and their fighting spirit put to use as 'excellent Soldiers'.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, in certain parts of the Highlands, such as the West, the resident 'Mountaineers' could still be 'desperate in Fight, cruel in Victory, fierce even in Conversation, apt to Quarrel' and 'even Murderers in their Passion'.⁷¹ The most extreme accounts depicted the Highlanders — fictitiously — as so cruel that they cut meat from their cattle whilst they were still alive.⁷² Finally, whilst the people of northern England made the most of the rugged landscape in which they lived, digging coals and other more precious minerals from their hills, the Scottish people were depicted as being at odds with or even a scourge upon their environment. The pure air of Edinburgh was spoilt by the dirtiness of the people who lived within it, and the rugged landscape could yet be brought to bear fruit, were it not for the sloth of those who failed to work it.⁷³

Conclusion

What is North? North is, ultimately, a relative construct. No holistic 'grammar of the North', applicable to all Norths, can ever be written. Most Norths, each one perceived by a different set of people and relating to a different geographic space, share certain characteristics, and overlap in different ways with one another, but no North is entirely the same as another. The 'North-ness' of a place (all of the things which make it explicitly Other from its South) is shaped by its geographical, geological, and meteorological specificities, and by the perspective of its perceiver. This essay has considered a diverse array of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources, all written from the perspective of a more-or-less privileged, well-educated southerner travelling northwards,

⁶⁹ Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, pp. 216–17.

⁷⁰ Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, pp. 220–21.

⁷¹ Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, p. 225.

⁷² Kirke, *Modern Account of Scotland*, p. 13.

⁷³ For the Edinburgh air, see Brereton, *Travels*, pp. 102–03; for the wasted potential of the land, see Weldon, 'Sir Anthony Weldon', p. 97, and Defoe, *Tour*, III, second pagination, pp. 208–10.

but written across two different centuries, and with reference to a number of different spaces across a relatively broad swathe of the relatively small island of mainland Britain. These sources have dealt with both northern England, a region within the origin-country of the travellers whose works have been considered, and Scotland, which shared a monarch with England from 1603 and a Parliament from 1707, but whose distinctive identity and only recent subsumption into Great Britain meant that it held the status of not just another region but another country. For all these diversities, however, there are sufficient commonalities between the texts considered that a shared grammar of North as perceived by southern Britons across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can certainly be discerned.

Common characteristics of the British North detected across the texts at hand include a sense of cold, remoteness, and sparse rural spaces when considered in opposition to the nature of the British South — qualities shared, both physically and rhetorically, with many other Norths. However, physically speaking the British North is distinctly more mountainous than its South, in a way that not all Norths are. As such, the rugged landscape of northern Britain is a vital and distinct element of the grammar of North underlying the accounts of travellers from the South. Visions of both northern Britain and Scotland made note of the rocky hills, although reactions to these hills shifted slightly across the period, with far more consciously negative invectives against the mountains written in the eighteenth century, particularly by Daniel Defoe. In both places the nature of the landscape was associated with the character of the people who inhabited it. Also in both cases, the outward appearance of the landscape contrasted with the promise it concealed, be it of hidden treasure, or the unexpected fecundity of the soil.

However, these shared characteristics were coded in significantly different ways depending upon whether a traveller found themselves North or South of the border with Scotland. The rural people of northern England were cast as figures to be pitied, amused by, or held up as moral examples of straitened virtue, whereas in many cases the Scottish Other was simply disdained. The cold landscape of northern England resulted in a people who were conversely warmer to make up for it; their hospitality was hearty and simple. Scottish hospitality could be excessive and drunken, or even bad-tasting, and the high places of Scotland produced a hardy, belligerent, and wild people. The treasures of the English hills were tapped through labour, whilst the productive promise of the Scottish landscape was left to waste due to the slothfulness of its inhabitants. In spite of its status as geographically contiguous and nominally united country with England, Scotland represented a place that was far stranger and wilder

than the region immediately to its south. The characteristics of the Scottish North matched those of the English North — but in Scotland, each and every one of those characteristics was seen as far more Other. Degrees of North in early modern Britain, then, were far less about changing characteristics, and far more about relative perceptions of difference, informed by and interlocking with considerations of national identities.

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UNKNOWN AND BARBARIAN: SCANDINAVIA AND THE BOUNDARIES OF CIVILIZATION IN EARLY MODERN SPAIN

Mateo Ballester Rodríguez

Scandinavia and its inhabitants were largely unknown by the Spaniards in the second part of the sixteenth century; although there was some contact between the two worlds, particularly related to commerce and diplomatic relations, this did not create a familiar and recognizable image of these peoples in Spanish society. On the contrary, the Nordic world brought to mind for the Spaniards a geographically remote environment and a reality that was foreign to them on various levels.

England, the Netherlands, and the German territories were within the known and recognizable world. Even though these countries might have been in a situation of open or latent conflict with Spain, their peoples were perceived as sharing in broad terms the same reality as the Spanish one, and therefore of having a similar nature. Further north, things changed. Scandinavia, Iceland, and the Nordic regions were regarded as places still unknown and unexplored. Its inhabitants were placed beyond the line of civilization and thus considered as barbarous. Rather than being based on empirical knowledge, the barbarism assigned to northern people derived from a historically recurrent pattern of thought in which one's own group is considered to define the centre of civilization and the geographic periphery is thus placed on the fringes of the civilized world.

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This categorization had an influence on the perception of the Nordic peoples in different ways. First, northern peoples were placed in a lower level of development, in terms of cultural and material development. Second, distance in terms of development and civilization was also identified with moral distance. The moral and behavioural codes common to all civilized people were considered not to govern in those territories. Third, the term *barbarians*, together with geographic distance and unfamiliarity, lent an aura of indeterminacy and mysteriousness on the northern people. This gave wings to imagination and allowed Spanish authors to plausibly place in the North the most amazing and supernatural phenomena, such as werewolves, witches, and sorcerers who could fly or change shape, animals which sprang from wood pieces, fed themselves out of air, and so forth. Phenomena that would be considered impossible to find in a physically near context acquired a certain plausibility when placed in distant and unknown places. Fourth, the distance from civilization was also perceived as a spiritual distance, a separation from the revealed truths, which, together with the assignment of supernatural qualities to these lands and people, ultimately led to the placing of diverse demonic phenomena on these latitudes.

How did Spanish authors describe these northern people who were basically unknown to them? As will be commented later on, some scholars have suggested that the northern people, the unknown savage, were imagined in connection with the known savage, which for Spain was characteristically the indigenous American. This article will argue that while there were some projections in this sense, they were nevertheless scarce. The few existing previous descriptions of Nordic peoples and territories, often unrealistic, were much more significant. Some of them derived from classical sources, and others from more recent texts published on the topic, particularly the popular *Historia de gentibus septentrionalis* (Rome, 1555) by Olaus Magnus, partly an extension of his previous *Carta marina* (Venice, 1539). There were, however, also elements of direct personal invention.

The early perception of the Scandinavian territories and peoples based on these sources lasted roughly until the second third of the seventeenth century. In the subsequent years these perceptions shifted, arguably due to the military conflicts between Spain and first Denmark and then Sweden, as a result of the European politics of alliances in the 'Thirty Years' War. From then onwards, Scandinavia acquired more realistic profiles in the eyes of Spanish society.

The Barbarian North

In the early modern period, Scandinavia was not a completely disconnected territory from Spain, nor had it been the case during the previous centuries.¹ Political and religious events brought the peoples of Spain into contact with northerners. In the second half of the thirteenth century political interests led to a strategic matrimonial union: Christina, princess of Norway, travelled to Castile in 1257 in order to marry Infant Philip, the brother of King Alfonso X, who aspired to acquire the title of Holy Roman Emperor.² The pilgrimages of Scandinavians to Santiago de Compostela were another point of contact between both worlds, particularly the one carried on by Birgitta Birgersdotter, the future Patron Saint of Sweden and founder of the Order of the Most Holy Saviour, also known as the Brigittines. This Order had an important presence in Spain since 1651, when the first of a series of convents adhering to it was established.³ In the first half of the sixteenth century, the crowning of Charles of Habsburg, later Emperor Charles V, as king of the Spanish territories brought about more intense Spanish engagement in European affairs, and specifically in Northern Europe.⁴ The fact that Christian II of Denmark was married to Elizabeth of Habsburg, the sister of Charles, brought the emperor closer to the Danish king, and in direct opposition to the new Swedish king, Gustav Vasa.

At that time the trading of goods between the regions was not widespread, but it did have some magnitude. The Swedish interest in salt and the Spanish one in copper are noteworthy examples, although the trading goods were rather varied.⁵ Most of these exchanges were carried out through Dutch intermediaries; as a result, the Dutch Revolt, starting in 1568, gave rise to a heightened desire to establish direct and stable contact between Spain and Sweden. This rapprochement sought, on the one hand, to establish new trading connections in order to substitute those lost during the Dutch Revolt, and, on the other, to

¹ The Viking incursions had been a point of contact quite early on, but they did not have much impact in terms of mutual knowledge between the two worlds.

² Philip and Alfonso were the sons of King Ferdinand III of Castile and his first wife, Elisabeth of Swabia. On the political and ideological aims of this marriage, see Gordo Molina, 'La Princesa Kristina de Noruega'. See also the chapter in this volume by Wangefelt Ström and Barbierato on Queen Christina and ambiguous notions of North.

³ Almazán, 'Santa Brígida en el Camino de Santiago'.

⁴ Quatrefages, 'Las relaciones diplomáticas hispano-suecas', pp. 993–94.

⁵ Alcalá-Zamora y Queipo de Llano, *España, Flandes y el Mar del Norte*, pp. 71–72; de Pazzis Pi Corrales, 'España y Suecia', pp. 639–42.

weaken the Dutch Republic, which at some periods was a common enemy. The embassy of Francisco de Eraso, sent in 1578 by Philip II to the Swedish court of John II,⁶ appears to have been seeking collaborators in the struggle against the Dutch rebels, and perhaps it was also an attempt to exert influence on a possible conversion of the monarch to Catholicism.⁷ However, the meeting was unsuccessful in both respects. The occurrence of such meetings was basically unknown by Spanish society, and they thus did not manage to generate an image of proximity between these two regions.

The unknown character of the territories was also projected onto its people, who were situated beyond the limits of what was perceived as the civilized world. The term 'barbarian' and its associated qualities were frequently ascribed to the Scandinavian inhabitants. In this regard, Miguel de Cervantes's *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* (The Travels of Persiles and Sigismunda),⁸ the Spanish fictional work of 1617 which dealt in this period most extensively with the Nordic world, is extremely significant. Cervantes published this work posthumously and considered it to be his finest work;⁹ its subtitle, *Historia septentrional* (A Northern History), indicates the setting in which the first half of the narration occurs: a Nordic Europe systematically situated beyond the limits of civilization.

The term 'barbarian' (*bárbaro*), associated with Nordic Europe, occurs throughout the work, appearing in the very first sentence.¹⁰ In the first part the protagonists travel from island to island on the northern seas; the first of them was *Isla Bárbara* (Barbaric Island), which was 'habitada de unos bárbaros, gente indómita y cruel' (inhabited by savage and cruel barbarians).¹¹ During their voyage around this Nordic archipelago, on several islands the protagonists encounter people who are generally 'rustica y medio bárbara, de poca

⁶ This embassy was partially established in response to the approach of the Swedish envoy La Gardie to Juan de Zúñiga, the Spanish ambassador in Rome, one year earlier; Quatrefages, 'Las relaciones diplomáticas hispano-suecas', pp. 995–96.

⁷ Ruiz Martín, 'La etapa marítima de las guerras de religión', pp. 197–98; Mörner, *Episodios de la historia*, 17–18; de Pazzis Pi Corrales, 'Tratarse de manera intermitente', pp. 255–56.

⁸ The English translation was published in 1619.

⁹ Cervantes died in 1616. The second part of *Don Quixote* was published in 1615.

¹⁰ 'Voces daba el bárbaro Corsicurbo' (How Corcicurbo the barbarian draws); Cervantes, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, p. 51. The English translations are taken, unless otherwise stated, from the 2005 edition, by Darby and Ife.

¹¹ Cervantes, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, p. 57.

urbanidad y de corazones rudos e insolentes' (rustics and half barbarians, of small courtesy and much pride).¹²

The discourse of barbarism in the characterization of the inhabitants of these Nordic lands, and arguably in a more general sense, is based on different dimensions, which are supposed to be connected to each other. First, the barbarians are primitive, they have rudimentary habits and very poor technical skills, their living conditions are rudimentary, as well as their clothing, weaponry, means of transport, and so forth. Some of them live in huts, others wear animal skins, travel by water in canoes or simple trunks, and use arrowheads made of flint. They are, to sum up, in a lower level of development.

The barbarians are also cruel and ruthless; their behaviour does not comply with the basic humanity principles which should govern relations with visitors, prisoners, and even enemies. Some of their practices, such as human sacrifice and cannibalism, offend the values of civilized man. On Barbaric Island, one of the characters narrates a practice that the inhabitants, 'persuadidos o ya del demonio, o ya de un antiguo hechicero' (through the persuasion of the devil, or some old sorcerer), consider as correct and unquestionable: 'que sacrificasen todos los hombres que a su ínsula llegasen, de cuyos corazones hiciesen polvos y los diesen a beber a los bárbaros más principales de la ínsula' (to sacrifice all the men that shall arrive in their isle, whose hearts they must reduce into powder, giving the same to drink to their chiefest personages).¹³

Their barbarism is also expressed in their absolute lack of decency, decorum, and a sophisticated spirit. Their customs are the constant antithesis of what is considered as morally acceptable behaviour. They are shameless, wearing little or no clothing without showing any signs of embarrassment; they are completely immoderate in their pleasures, particularly with alcohol consumption;¹⁴ and they do not respect basic sexual taboos, such as incest, adultery, and polygamy. On one of the islands a protagonist recounts that there is a custom in which, on the day of the marriage, the bride stays at home, 'esperando a que entren los hermanos de su esposo, si los tiene, y algunos de los parientes más cercanos, de uno en uno, a coger las flores de su jardín y a manosear los ramilletes que ella quisiera guardar intactos para su marido' (staying till her husband's brothers, or,

¹² Cervantes, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, p. 105.

¹³ Cervantes, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, p. 57.

¹⁴ 'No danzan ni tienen otros pasatiempos sino los que les ofrece Baco en sus tazas risueño y en sus bebidas lascivo' (They neither dance nor leap, nor take any other pleasure but in drinking); Cervantes, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, p. 184.

in default of such, the nearest kinsfolk come to gather flowers in that garden where her husband only should have entrance).¹⁵ The observer's conclusion is compelling: 'Costumbre bárbara y maldita, que va contra las leyes de la honestidad y del buen decoro. Porque ¿qué limpieza puede ni debe agradar más al esposo que la que la mujer lleva a su poder en su entereza?' (A custom brutish and barbarous: for what richer dowry can a maid bring to her husband than her virginity?).¹⁶

The inhabitants of the Nordic world appear thus, from a dichotomous and hierarchical viewpoint that affirms the cultural superiority of the viewer, as 'the anti-Spain, the anti-Europe, a repulsive model for any contemporary reader of Cervantes'.¹⁷ The extreme physical environment of the Nordic regions, towards which human nature is poorly adapted, explains the distance existing between these regions and the civilized world. In their crossing from island to island, all of them inhospitable in one way or another, the protagonists of the novel 'deseaban topar alguna que les acogiese, porque imaginaban que no podían ser tan crueles sus moradores, que no lo fuesen más las montañas de nieve y los duros y ásperos riscos de las que atrás dejaban' (desired in some one of them to receive entertainment, because they could not believe that their inhabitants could be so cruel, but that the mountains of snow and steep rocks, which they left behind hard by, did far surmount them).¹⁸

The inhumanity of the environment prefigures the inhumanity of its people. The usual division during that era of the world into climate zones is implicit in *Persiles*. According to this view, the earth has five horizontal climate zones: three with extreme climates (the central torrid zone and the two zones in the extreme south and north), and two medium zones with benign and mild climates.¹⁹ Climatology determines the human character. Harsh climate zones produce human types with some kind of imbalance, and mild climate zones produce individuals with a balanced nature and character. The categories of civilization and barbarism correspond with the temperate and intemperate zones respectively.

¹⁵ Cervantes, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, p. 112.

¹⁶ Cervantes, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, p. 112.

¹⁷ Andrés, 'Insularidad y barbarie en *Los Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*', p. 116.

¹⁸ Cervantes, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, p. 105.

¹⁹ This idea became widespread in Spain particularly after the publication in 1575 of *Examen de ingenios* by Juan Huarte de San Juan. This treatise on psychological characters had several editions and translations in the following decades and, as Jean Bodin's *Les six livres de la République*, was very influential in the popularization of the idea that the collective character of human groups was determined by the climate zone which they inhabited.

The Nordic world, particularly Norway, was identified with darkness, to the extent that it became a metaphoric image frequently used in Spanish poetry and literature at the time. The novel *Persiles*, with its journey from the distant northern lands to southern Europe and finally to Rome, the centre of Catholic Europe, should also be understood as a journey from barbarism to civilization, from the lowest to the highest spirituality and, literally and metaphorically, from darkness to light.²⁰

Scandinavia: A Setting for the Fantastical

One essential distinction in the perception of the world is the differentiation between the known and the unknown territories. For Spaniards, the Nordic territories and peoples fell into the second category, and were consequently judged as being fundamentally different, not only in terms of morality, but also in relation to what can plausibly exist. As Garrosa indicates, 'distance, by blurring the limits of reality, helps to make unreal stories seem credible, or at least possible'.²¹ A world that does not live according to human norms may thus also credibly exist outside of natural norms. Barbarism, linked in this case to an aura of vagueness and mystery, resulting from an absence of a clear image of these peoples, raises a gamut of fantastical possibilities. The most fabulous phenomena and creatures are situated at these latitudes, where they acquire a certain degree of plausibility.

The creation of a mystical aura surrounding the North is particularly remarkable, to an even higher extent than in *Persiles*, in *Jardín de flores curiosas* (*Garden of Odd Flowers*, published in 1570)²² by Antonio de Torquemada. While this author may be considered a humanist in many respects,²³ this work is a collection of *mirabilia*; the favoured genre, as once stated, of curious but not wise spirits.²⁴ The book gathers extraordinary anecdotes, incidents and phenomena from all around the world, with the intention to surprise, amaze, and satiate the reader's liking for the supernatural. It is quite significant that two of the six chapters are dedicated to the Nordic world.

²⁰ Forcione, *Cervantes' Christian Romance*, p. 123; Flores Morador, *Tierra firme anticipada*, p. 148.

²¹ Garrosa Resina, 'Algunas reflexiones', p. 34.

²² This work was published posthumously by his sons as the author died one year earlier.

²³ For example, the use of dialogue in this book draws on that tradition; Dumora, 'Le Savoir géographique et le sacré', p. 59.

²⁴ Dumora, 'Le Savoir géographique et le sacré', p. 74.

The distance and the absence of a known physical end to the Northern territories renders them with a mysterious aura. It somehow functioned as a mythical space, while being part of the same continent: 'no hay ninguno que con verdad pueda decir que sabe adonde se acaba ni fenece Europa, ni que con razones suficientes dé testimonio de ello' (no one can truly say that they know where Europe ends and ceases to exist, nor can they reason it in a convincing way).²⁵ Faced with something that lies beyond the existing knowledge and in response to this vacuum of reliable information, imagination is set in motion.

Torquemada bases much of his information on *Historia de gentibus septentrionalis* by Olaus Magnus, who as a source is considered 'mejor que todos' (better than the rest).²⁶ However, showing total disinterest in the more realistic contents of the book, Torquemada retells the most shocking and fantastical ones, which he subsequently exaggerates and magnifies. The Nordic world, a near milieu to Olaus Magnus (although he wrote more as a traveller, chronicler, and cosmographer than as an insider),²⁷ was for Torquemada a completely fantastical environment, where human norms pertaining to the civilized world were absent, and all kinds of deviations of nature were to be found. According to Volpi, Nordic Europe is in the eyes of Torquemada 'a free zone of the marvellous where the only law is to violate any physical, natural, civil and canonical law'.²⁸ *Jardín de flores curiosas*, a popular work at the time in Spain and Europe,²⁹ presents all kinds of paranormal creatures and phenomena in the North: sorcerers, witches, necromancers, werewolves, mythical animals, beasts, and land, and sea monsters. Torquemada mentions, for instance, the existence of birds that feed themselves on plain air,³⁰ or which are engendered out of leaves.³¹ He also alludes to the abundance in these regions of sorcerers that 'tienen sus tiempos determinados en que se juntan y hacen sus congregaciones: y para esto, toman las figuras de lobos' (at a certain time each year they get together at their

²⁵ Torquemada, *Jardín de flores curiosas*, p. 239.

²⁶ Torquemada, *Jardín de flores curiosas*, p. 271.

²⁷ The *Carta marina* was in fact the result of a journey taken by Olaus Magnus in 1518–19. See also the discussions of Olaus Magnus's depictions of magical practice among indigenous northern peoples in DeAngelo's essay in this volume.

²⁸ Volpi, 'Letteratura e filomitià', p. 460.

²⁹ There were several editions of the work in Spain until it was banned in 1632. It was translated into French (1579), Italian (1590), English (1600), and German (1626).

³⁰ Torquemada, *Jardín de flores curiosas*, p. 484.

³¹ Torquemada, *Jardín de flores curiosas*, p. 486.

gatherings, and they all take the shape of wolves).³² Even Nordic royalty shows mastery of evil and magic forces:

uno fue Enrico, rey de Suecia, casi en nuestros tiempos, el cual tenía tan sujetos a los demonios que, entre otras muchas cosas que hacía, cuando quería que el aire se mudase, no tenía necesidad sino quitar el bonete de la cabeza, y de la parte que con él señalaba, se volvía luego.³³

(one was Henry, King of Sweden, that almost in our time, had such control over demons that, among other things he did, when he wanted to change the wind's direction, ha just had to take his hat off his head, and the wind turned in the direction he pointed.)

This tendency to ascribe mythical elements to the northern limits of Europe dates back, as it is well known, to the classical period, which provided the first conceptions of the Nordic regions. While Antonio de Torquemada takes some of his contents from this tradition, the classical tradition had been the only source of references in Francisco López de Gomara's description of the Nordic World, the first relatively extensive one of which we have record in Spain. This description is included in the beginning of his *Historia general de las Indias* (1552), where López de Gomara alludes to diverse Greek and Latin authors, including Herodotus, Ptolemy, Parmenides, Plutarch, and Solinus. From the latter he claims to have taken the description of the Hyperboreans, who live 'donde un día dura medio año y una noche otro medio' (where one day lasts half a year and one night another), as well as the comment that, as a result of this peculiar time cycle, they live for such a long time that 'hartos de mucho vivir, se matan ellos mismos' (tired of so much living, they kill themselves).³⁴

The enduring influence of the classical tradition is manifested in the last part of *Persiles*, when it is revealed that the eponymous character stems from Thule: 'En la última parte de Noruega, casi debajo del Polo Ártico, está la isla que se tiene por última en el mundo, a lo menos en aquella parte, cuyo nombre es Tile, a que Virgilio llamó Tule' (In the furthest part of Norway, almost under the pole Arctic, is the isle which is holden the furthest of the world on that side, whose name is Thule. Virgil calleth it Thule).³⁵

³² Torquemada, *Jardín de flores curiosas*, p. 463.

³³ Torquemada, *Jardín de flores curiosas*, p. 447.

³⁴ López de Gomara, *Historia general de las Indias*, p. 13.

³⁵ Cervantes, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, p. 465. Shortly after, though, Cervantes comments that the island of *Tile* or *Tule*, 'que agora vulgarmente se llama Islanda' (which is

Cervantes refers also to the Greek etymology of Thule, which seems to indicate that he was aware of other classical sources. Some of the texts where ancient Greek and Latin authors referred to the island were known in early modern Spain.³⁶ Two of the publications Cervantes may well have known are the summarized translation of the book by Antonius Diogenes, *The Incredible Wonders beyond Thule* (written around the beginning of the second century), published in 1606. Lucian of Samosata parodied Diogenes's work shortly after it was written in *A True Story*, which was translated into Italian and published several times in the first half of the sixteenth century, and into Spanish in 1551. The geographical setting of *Persiles* at the Nordic regions and the frenetic series of adventures and fantastic incidents, seem to show an influence by these works.

Nonetheless, the fact that the protagonists are two lovers seems to have been inspired by Heliodorus's *Aethiopica*, which was translated into Spanish in 1587 with the title *Teaganes y Cariclea* and became a very popular book.³⁷ The exotic and fantastical connotations that Egypt and Ethiopia had during the time of Heliodorus, which made them suitable as the setting and background of a Byzantine novel, were quite convincingly transferred by Cervantes to the Nordic world, almost totally unknown to the Spanish. The recommendations of Torcuato Tasso in *Discorsi dell'arte poetica e del poema eroico* (1587), which mention Norway, Iceland, and the North as an environment that could func-

commonly called Iceland), is not the the uttermost in all the northern seas, since he mentions the existence further away of the island of *Frislandia* (*Frisland*), which Cervantes narrates that was discovered by *Nicolo Zeno* in the year 1380; Cervantes, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, 469. Cervantes had either not read López de Gomara or does not pay attention to him here, since Gomara expressly rejects that Thule is Iceland, which he considers to be larger, further north, and unknown by the Greek and Latin authors, as it was discovered later; López de Gomara, *Historia general de las Indias*, 21. The question whether or not the island of Thule in Cervantes's *Persiles* is actually Iceland has been a matter of long discussion and is still unresolved; Díaz de Alda Heikkilä, 'Última Thule y el contexto nórdico'. See also Avdagic's chapter in this volume for more on the classical tradition of Thule.

³⁶ It is mentioned by up to thirty-six authors from antiquity according to Díaz de Alda Heikkilä, 'Última Thule y el contexto nórdico', p. 883.

³⁷ In his *Novelas ejemplares* (1613, p. 75), Cervantes comments that his next *Persiles* 'se atreve a competir con Heliodoro' (dares to compete with Heliodorus). Heliodorus work influenced other Spanish novels; *Historia de los amores de Clareo y Florisea, y de los trabajos de Isea* (1552), by Núñez de Reinoso, stands out as a precedent. The plot and characters of *Persiles* were obviously influenced by another Byzantine work, *The Loves of Chaereas and Calirhoe*, by Achilles Tatius, translated into Spanish with the title *Historia de los amores de Clareo y Florisea* (1552).

tion as a counterpoint to the predictable known world, may also have had an influence on this choice, since Cervantes was a great admirer of Tasso.³⁸

Barbarism and Demonology

These fantastical elements do not distinguish the Northern lands simply as a different world but also as a world where evil powers are more potent. This is the ground for the establishing of a hierarchy among spiritually lower and higher territories and peoples. The nexus between barbarism, geographic distance, and spiritual distance in relation to the true faith is particularly noticeable in Torquemada. The third treatise of his book, dedicated to witchcraft and black magic, was the most popular part of it at the time, and most probably the motive behind its inclusion in the Spanish index of banned books in 1632. The descriptions of the Nordic world are to a large extent an extension of his previous considerations on demonology.

Torquemada utters a degrading and categorical judgement with respect to the inhabitants of the Nordic world:

esta gente, discípulos de los demonios y que tan familiarmente habitan entre ellos y tratan con ello, y donde cada día se ven visiones y fantasmas que engañan a los caminantes, apareciéndoles en forma de algunos amigos y conocido, desapareciendo al mejor tiempo, de manera que parece tener el demonio en estas tierras septentrionales mayor dominio y soltura que en otras ningunas.³⁹

(these people, disciples of the demons, live among them and treat them familiarly, in a place where visions and ghosts that trick visitors are seen every day, appearing in the guise of a friend or acquaintance, and then disappearing, leading to the conclusion that the devil has more power and skill in the northern lands than in any others).

It is debatable whether the fantastical elements that Cervantes situated in the northern regions are derived from a direct knowledge of *Carta marina* or

³⁸ Flores Morador, *Tierra firme anticipada*, p. 149; Brioso Santos, 'Cervantes y Lope', pp. 42–43.

³⁹ Torquemada, *Jardín de flores curiosas*, p. 449. In another passage Torquemada reiterates that 'en esta tierra parece que el demonio está más suelto y tiene mayor libertad que en otras partes; y así quieren decir algunos que es la principal habitación de los demonios' (in this land it seems that the devil is more unleashed and has more freedom than in others; some people say that it is the main dwelling place of the demons); Torquemada, *Jardín de flores curiosas*, pp. 444–45.

Historia de gentibus septentrionalis, or if he took his fantastical contents from Torquemada's *Jardín de flores curiosas*. He might well have known and read both authors,⁴⁰ but his references to the presence of the devil in these lands, as a way to explain the abundance of sorcerers, witches, werewolves, and other extraordinary creatures, seems to indicate Torquemada as the main influence. Probably his most significant passage in this respect is the narration of Rutilo, one of the characters of the book, telling how he was flown on a cape from Italy to Norway by a sorceress who, after embracing him with lascivious intent, turned into a wolf, regaining her human appearance after being stabbed to death. Another character comments that he should thank God for liberating him from the sorceress, 'de las cuales hay mucha abundancia en estas septentrionales tierras' (whereof there are very many in these northern countries), and he concludes that 'todas estas transformaciones son ilusiones del demonio, y permisión de Dios y castigo de los abominables pecados deste maldito género de gente' (these transformations are the illusions of the devil, permitted by God as a punishment for the abominable sins of these wicked people).⁴¹

Persiles has been described, correctly in my opinion, as a journey of spiritual perfection, from lands of dubious religious character to Rome, the most spiritually elevated point in the Catholic mindset; geographic distance is thus conflated with spiritual distance.⁴² Hence the proliferation in the Nordic regions

⁴⁰ Cervantes may have known the work by Olaus Magnus in Latin or Italian during his stay in Italy in different periods between 1569 and 1575. In any case there is no doubt that Cervantes knew of the text by Torquemada; in *Don Quixote*, when judging the books that the eponymous protagonist has in his library, a character mentions Torquemada and his *Don Olivante de Laura*: 'fue el mismo que compuso *Jardín de flores*, y en verdad que no sepa determinar cual de los dos libros sea más verdadero, o por mejor decir, menos mentiroso' (he was the writer of *Jardín de flores*, and I truly do not know which of the books is more truthful, or to put it in more rightly, less deceitful); Cervantes, *Don Quijote de la Mancha I*, p. 245. The opinions of the characters in *Don Quixote* certainly do not necessarily mirror the exact thoughts and judgements of Cervantes himself; Díez Fernández, 'Desde el frío, con amor', p. 49. Contrary to the opinion of Lozano Renieblas, who argues that the influence of Torquemada is yet to be demonstrated (Lozano Renieblas, 'Sobre el barnaclaras del *Persiles*', p. 150; Lozano Renieblas, *Cervantes y el mundo del Persiles*, p. 26), various authors have argued that, regardless of the negative opinion expressed in *Don Quixote*, there is a clear influence of Torquemada in Cervantes's *Persiles*. See Allegra, 'Introducción'; Sánchez Laílla, 'Mecanismos de verosimilitud'; and Díez Fernández, 'Desde el frío, con amor'.

⁴¹ Cervantes, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, p. 92.

⁴² Avalué-Arce, 'Introducción', p. 21; Forcione, *Cervantes' Christian Romance*, p. 123. Díaz de Alda Heikkilä suggests that the pilgrimage in *Persiles* from the Nordic countries to Rome is a deliberate reproduction of the biography of Olaus Magnus; Díaz de Alda Heikkilä, 'Última

of abnormal, fantastical, and marvellous phenomena, which sometimes are presented as mere curiosities but are often regarded as proof of the dominant presence of evil forces in these territories. Barbarism may also indicate, from the perspective of that time, distance from God, and thus the active presence of the devil. Protestantism practised in these territories was regarded from Spain, deeply influenced by the ideas and mentality of the Counter-Reformation, as an expression of the intrinsic paganism of these people, connected to their barbarism and spiritual degradation.

The Known and Unknown Barbarian: The New World and Scandinavia

However, in the characterization of the remote and unknown Nordic peoples in *Persiles*, not all of the descriptions which are striking and shocking are a product of fantasy and imagination, with no reference whatsoever with the real world. Some of the descriptions reproduce images of another world that was also situated on the limits of civilization but was not unknown to Spaniards. In sixteenth century Spain a large amount of texts were written and published on the discovery, exploration, and colonization of the American continent, which included extensive information about its people and their habits. A reiterative question, and a quite polemical one in current research on the description of the Nordic world in early modern Spain, is the degree to which it was depicted by using information and images of the New World; in other words, the extent to which the unknown barbarian was imagined by identifying it with the known barbarian.

Francisco López de Gomara (one of the most important chroniclers of the New World, even though he never set foot in the American continent) deserves special attention, as he dealt with both geographies. The interest of López de Gomara in the Northern world was probably piqued by his personal contact with Olaus Magnus, 'a quien yo conversé mucho tiempo en Bolonia y en Venecia' (to whom I conversed for a long time in Bologna and Venice).⁴³ In the

Thule y el contexto nórdico', p. 882. This interpretation is suggestive but unlikely, considering that it has not even been proven that Cervantes had direct knowledge of the texts by Olaus Magnus.

⁴³ López de Gomara, *Historia general de las Indias*, p. 13. To my knowledge, the only author who has paid attention to the meeting between Olaus Magnus and López de Gomara is Fernando Flores Morador, which is contradictory regarding the date they met. After stating that they met in Bologna at some point between 1548 and 1549 (Flores Morador, *Tierra firme anticipada*, p. 147), he later asserts that they met in Venice and Bologna around 1540 (p. 157).

few descriptions López de Gomara wrote of the inhabitants of the northern lands, he does not seem to use information from Olaus's published works; his conversations with Olaus Magnus dealt about Northern geography.⁴⁴ In his descriptions of Nordic people López de Gomara does not transfer any content from the New World, relying instead on the aforementioned classic Greek and Latin authors.⁴⁵

During the first decades after the discovery of America, both territories were perceived as unknown and yet to be unveiled. However, over time and as the New World was explored and consequently demystified, they began to be viewed in different lights. Martín Fernández de Enciso, author of *Summa de geographia* (1519), provides an early example of this gradual differentiation. This author, who stayed more than a decade in the New World, described it in realistic terms while he often depicted the rest of the unexplored world through fantastical images.⁴⁶ Some decades later, the early demystification of America by Martín de Enciso had become widespread in the Spanish society; at the time when Torquemada wrote *Jardín de flores curiosas*, the Nordic world and the New World were considered rather differently. The scarcity or almost total absence of references to the New World in Torquemada's compendium of mythical phenomena shows that these territories, unlike the Nordic regions, had to a large extent lost the mysterious aura earlier attached to them.⁴⁷ Torquemada comments that 'no vemos que ni en la India Mayor, que los de nación portuguesa han conquistado, ni en los de las Indias Occidentales, se hayan hallado monstruos algunos' (we cannot say that monsters have been discovered either in India, conquered by the Portuguese nation, or in the West Indies).⁴⁸

The latter date seems more plausible; there are still important gaps in the biography of López de Gomara, but it is estimated that he left Italy to return to Spain around the year 1540.

⁴⁴ López de Gomara indicates that Olaus assured him that there was a passage to China through Norway and the North Pole; López de Gomara, *Historia general de las Indias*, p. 21. During their meeting they discussed the possible existence of a Nordic land passage to the American continent via Greenland, since he is unsure as to whether or not Greenland is physically connected to America (p. 22).

⁴⁵ He also cites Saxo Grammaticus, Galeoto Marzio da Narni and his work *De incognitis vulgo*, and Abravio, 'a Goth historian'.

⁴⁶ Dumora, 'Le Savoir géographique et le sacré', p. 62.

⁴⁷ Allegra, 'Antonio de Torquemada, mitógrafo *ingenuo y popular*'; Volpi, 'Letteratura e filomitiá'; Martínez-Góngora, 'Los personajes fabulosos'; Brioso Santos, 'Cervantes y Lope'; Brioso Santos, 'Tristes tópicos cervantinos'.

⁴⁸ Torquemada, *Jardín de flores curiosas*, p. 125.

Even though all empirical evidence refuted the existence of fantastical creatures and monsters in America, Torquemada still kept a vague hope that they might not be too far away: 'pero en fin se entiende que es verdad lo que está escrito; y así dicen que se han recogido a las montañas y partes que no son habitadas de gentes' (but all in all we believe that what is written is true, and it is said that the monsters have retreated to the mountains and other uninhabited areas).⁴⁹ Once again, the fantastical is placed beyond the geographic limits of the known world.

Marvellous phenomena had shifted location. The unknown North was the place still left for Torquemada to let loose his lust for paranormal and fantastic phenomena, after the New World has been demystified. According to literary scholar Giovanni Allegra, "a medida que la historia va banalizando la realidad del cosmos, el hombre todavía medieval va cultivando huertos fascinadores, deleitándose con antiguas relaciones, asignando a los lugares impolutos aquellos misterios de que se ha visto defraudado en los acontecimientos del último siglo" (as history goes about trivializing the reality of the cosmos, the still medieval man cultivates other places for the fantastical, taking pleasure in ancient narrations, assigning to pristine places those mysteries which he has been deprived of during the last century).⁵⁰ Torquemada was not interested in information from territories under Spanish dominion, since the fantastical and the marvellous are no longer to be found there.⁵¹ The North remained one of the last places where imagination could be unleashed.

Quite significantly, in *Discorsi dell'arte poetica e del poema eroico* (published in 1587, written probably around 1567), Torquato Tasso also placed the New World, together with the Nordic world, as plausible settings for literary works with fantastical content.⁵² However, what was valid in Italy at the last third of the sixteenth century was certainly not the case in Spain. Descriptions of American peoples could be shocking and even scabrous, and they certainly provided elements to place hierarchically the civilized and the savage, the ruling and the subdued peoples, but they were not fantastical and did not have supernatural elements.

⁴⁹ Torquemada, *Jardín de flores curiosas*, pp. 125–26.

⁵⁰ Allegra, 'Introducción', p. 56.

⁵¹ Martínez-Góngora, 'Los personajes fabulosos', p. 2.

⁵² 'Pero di Gottia, e di Norvegia, e di Suevia, e di Islanda, o dell'Indie Orientali, o di paesi di nuovo ritrovati nel vastissimo oceano oltre le colonne d'Ercole, si dee prender la material de sì fatti poemi' (For poems of this nature, one should look for material in Gothia and Norway, in Sweden and Iceland, or in the West Indies, or in the recently discovered countries beyond the Pillars of Hercules); Black, *Life of Torcuato Tasso*, I, 393.

In contrast to the general agreement on the absence of references of the New World in Torquemada's depiction of the Nordic territories and inhabitants, this is highly debated for Cervantes's *Persiles*. *Persiles* includes numerous mentions of gold and pearls, whose high value outside the territory was ignored by the indigenous population; there are, as previously seen, also allusions to practices such as human sacrifice with removal of the heart and to ritualized incest. These descriptions seem clearly to be taken from accounts of the New World. In 1914 Schevill and Bonilla highlighted the influence of several texts about the New World, particularly *Comentarios reales de los Incas* (1609) by Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, on Cervantes's last novel.⁵³ Many subsequent authors have insisted in this argumentation, broadening the range of possible influences to many other texts from American literature, such as, among others, *Cartas de Relación* by Hernán Cortes (1522); *Historia general y natural de las Indias* by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo (1535); *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (1552) by Bartolome de las Casas; *La Araucana* (1569, 1578, and 1589) by Alonso de Ercilla; and *Historia de la Fundación y Discurso de la Provincia de Santiago de México* (1596) by Agustín Dávila Padilla.⁵⁴

However, there is not enough evidence to assert a direct influence by specific texts, nor are New World images frequent.⁵⁵ Explicit allusions to America cannot be found in *Persiles*. The direct references in the literary works of Cervantes indicate that his primary interest outside of Spain is the Mediterranean world (the Ottoman Empire, the Berber pirates, the Moors, etc.) and the Nordic world and its people in the first part of *Persiles*. Apart from some sporadic references in *Don Quixote*, the New World and the indigenous Americans are almost entirely absent from the literary works of Cervantes.⁵⁶ The barbarians from the Byzantine novel of Heliodorus seem to have been more influential in his description of the Northern people than the indigenous Americans.⁵⁷

⁵³ Schevill and Bonilla, 'Introducción', pp. ix–x.

⁵⁴ Osuna, 'Vacilaciones y olvidos de Cervantes en el *Persiles*'; Cro, 'Cervantes, el *Persiles* y la historiografía Indiana'; de Armas Wilson, *Cervantes, the Novel and the New World*.

⁵⁵ Lozano Renieblas, *Cervantes y el mundo del *Persiles**; Brioso Santos, 'Cervantes y Lope'; Brioso Santos, 'Tristes tópicos cervantinos'.

⁵⁶ Brioso Santos, 'Tristes tópicos cervantinos', pp. 260–61. It is nonetheless a fact that in May 1590 Cervantes requested a post in America from the king (in a letter that is now kept in the Archivo General de Indias). This is, however, isolated data that does not appear to respond to a long planned project, and thus does not indicate, as several authors have claimed, that America played a central role in the thoughts and works of Cervantes.

⁵⁷ Lozano Renieblas, *Cervantes y el mundo del *Persiles**, pp. 125–28; Brioso Santos, 'Cervantes y Lope', p. 38.

Cervantes appears to be acquainted with the recent literature on Northern Europe. The background of the first part of the book is a broad and extensive Nordic geography, which includes Thule, Friesland, Denmark, Danea, Norway, Greenland, Golandia, Lithuania, Bituania, and so forth. All through his novel, Cervantes shows a certain degree of awareness of the developments of his age in Nordic cartography and geographic knowledge. He also shows some limitations, such as in his distinction between Danea and Denmark, which are the same country and appeared as such on the maps of the time.⁵⁸ An unquestioned influence in this respect, considering that Cervantes cites it directly, is the narration of the journey of the brothers Nicolo and Antonio Zeno to the northern lands around the 1380s (*Dello scoprimento dell'isole Frislanda, Eslanda, Engronelanda, Estotilanda, et Icaria, fatto por due fratelli Zeni*), published in Venice in 1558.⁵⁹ Among the elements taken from this book, Cervantes attributes the discovery of Friesland, prominent in the work as it is the birthplace of the heroine Sigismunda, to Nicolo Zeno.⁶⁰ His reference to a monastery dedicated to St Thomas in *Gronlanda* seems also to be taken from this book, which even includes it in one of the maps. References and influences in *Persiles* are vague and unclear, but it appears that the transfer of elements from the New World is rather limited.

Conclusion

A common way to describe the Nordic people in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Spain was through ideas of barbarism. The North was placed beyond the line of civilization. The concrete expression of this barbarism had nonetheless to be invented, imagined, since these regions were basically

⁵⁸ In a passage of the work it is commented that 'el rey de los Danaos, Leopoldo' (Leopoldus, king of Danea) had put 'el rey antiguo de Dinamarca' (the ancient king of Denmark) through much hardship due to the absence of 'Arnaldo, príncipe heredero de Dinamarca' (Arnaldo, prince of Denmark); Cervantes, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, p. 272. The same error is found in the dictionary of Covarrubias, from 1611 (Avalle-Arce, 'Introducción', pp. 231–32: note 235).

⁵⁹ The journey of the Zeno brothers, published for the first time by one of their descendants almost two centuries after its alleged occurrence, was almost certainly an invention or a very free reconstruction, to which a large amount of new information was added; Díaz de Alda Heikkilä, 'Última Thule y el contexto nórdico', p. 880.

⁶⁰ Cervantes, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, p. 469. Cervantes only cites this name, but Nicolo is also the name of the descendant of the Zeno brothers who published the book.

unknown to Spaniards. Barbarism is understood in different senses, which are connected to each other. First, the inhabitants were described as primitive and undeveloped, in terms of technology and material culture. Second, their lack of a proper culture is also expressed in their improper and loose moral behaviour, which steadily violates the most basic rules of civilized life. Third, the unknown character of these territories made them suitable to place there all sorts of bizarre and amazing creatures and supernatural phenomena. Particularly after the New World had been discovered, explored, partly occupied, and consequently demystified, the Nordic world became for Spaniards a plausible place where the most fantastic things and creatures could be found. Fourth, the proliferation in these regions of mystic phenomena, together with their distance from the core of the Catholic world and their recurrent identification with darkness, fostered also the idea that this was a region of spiritual weakness, where the devil had a stronger presence. Individuals naively interested in *mirabilia*, curiosities and wonders, but also those concerned with demonology, made out of the Nordic regions a main focus of interest.

These fantastical images of Nordic Europe ended up vanishing and disappearing. The process by which this happened was, as is often the case, by direct contact and closer knowledge. What had happened in relation to the New World in the first decades of the sixteenth century occurred later in a similar way in relation to the Nordic world, roughly in the second third of the seventeenth century. War first with Denmark, and later with Sweden, in the Thirty Years' War, fostered negative images of the Nordic peoples, but at the same time gave them a realistic profile. The apparently timeless human drive for the fantastic had to be directed to other settings.

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OMNE MALUM AB AQUILONE: IMAGES OF THE EVIL NORTH IN EARLY MODERN ITALY AND THEIR IMPACT ON CROSS-RELIGIOUS ENCOUNTERS

Helena Wangefelt Ström and Federico Barbierato

Out of the north the evil will break forth on all the inhabitants of the land. (Jeremiah 1. 14)

For disaster looms out of the north, even terrible destruction. (Jeremiah 6. 1)

Betwixt two charming words, comes in my father,
And like the tyrannous breathing of the north.
Shakes all our buds from growing.
(William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 1.iv.35–37.1)

Tyrannous, destructive, infertile, intellectually inferior, and the home of witches and werewolves. A northern visitor to southern Europe in the early modern period travelled — willingly or not — into a world imbued with forceful associations related to the North that were well established, historically rooted, and alive in the minds of the people in the South. These concepts, mythological images, and archetypes were well known also by the northerners themselves, and were, contrary to what one might expect, not merely a yoke of negative expectations but also in some cases cleverly used to enhance certain aspects of a constructed image or a desired reputation.

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Figure 13.1: Minor devils, demons, satyrs, and hobgoblins. Detail from Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, Rome, 1555. Image in public domain.¹

From where does the notion of the North as the origin of evil derive? And, from a practical point of view, how did this presumption affect the way in which foreigners and phenomena coming from or associated with the North were perceived in encounters with people in the South? What values were linked to northernness, and how were they used? With this chapter, we want to introduce a discussion concerning the impacts of the popular, academic, and theological notions of the ‘evil’ North on actions and encounters between South and North, in particular in the field of religion. Starting from the origins of the image of the evil North in history and religion, we will move on to explore some of its representations in literature and iconography. We will then examine perceptions of the North as held in the early modern South, and how such images were instrumentalized for multiple purposes: during the Reformation as anti-Lutheran or anti-Catholic, and during the Swedish imperial era to intimidate or motivate adversaries and allies. Before concluding, we dwell a moment on the uses of the North and its evil nature employed by Queen Christina of Sweden during and after her conversion to Catholicism and her move to Rome. Although the confines of space allow us to assess only a very narrow selection of sources and examples, our overall aim is to point out and suggest further extensive explorations of the multiple uses of the ascribed evilness of the North, in particular in the field of religious and cultural controversies.¹

¹ For an introduction to the work, see <<http://tridente.it/venetie/fhome.htm>> [accessed 1 May 2016].



Figure 13.2: The Northern Wind, Septentrio. Detail from Jacopo de Barbari, *Map of Venice*, Venice, Museo Correr. 1501. Digital version released into public domain by Museo Correr.

The notion of northern evil is known through history and across cultures, and it appears under many appearances and names: Aquilone, Septentrione, Boreas, Tramontana, Bise, Mistral.² The image of the North as a bringer of evil and destruction, or, indeed, as a place of evil in itself, is supported by numerous verses in the Bible and occurs also in other religions, throughout history, and in a multitude of expressions and cultures.³ Within the northern countries, the Sami were part of the mysterious North and were connected to magical powers and exotic appearances. In an early modern context in which Northern Europe was intimately connected to the profound changes following the Reformation, and in which Sweden was building an image of a successful great power as the land of the Lion of the North, the Athens of the North, and the Polar Star, a narrative of northern evil and danger was nonetheless still alive and widespread.

The North Wind was commonly feared as a destructive force that could spoil harvests and cause medical problems.⁴ This might be one reason why, in

² For a broader picture of the concept, see for example Beller and Leerssen, *Imagology*, or, in the same series, Fjågesund, *The Dream of the North*.

³ See, for example, Auger's essay on myths and notions regarding the Vikings in this volume.

⁴ The question was debated. See, for example, the discussion in Zacchia, *Quaestiones medico legales, qui continentur consilia et responsa*, III, 186–87. The observations of Alessandro Petronio are interesting, in *Delli Romani et di conservar la sanità*, pp. 10, 13, 20, 31–32, 163, 303, 406 and, most of all, Cartegni, *Trattato de venti in quanto si appartiene al medico*, pp. 17, 33, 38–43.

Jacopo de Barbari's map of Venice (1501), the North Wind is the only one of the personalized *putti* head winds that is blindfolded (Figure 13.2). Blindfoldedness in early modern Europe could, as Adriano Prosperi has pointed out, be connected to both positive and negative qualities and associations, including, for example, the blindfolded and fair; blinded by the crowds; Justice as blindfolded; the blindfolded and mislead Synagogue; or the blindfolded jester symbolizing stupidity and human flaws. In this case, the North Italian tradition of the North Wind as bringer of diseases and spoiler of harvests makes it plausible that the point of the representation is to show a pre-Reformation lack of enlightenment, manners, and civilization.⁵

The images of the North are a beloved topos in early modern literature. George Granville, The Lord Lansdowne, described the North Wind as the raging and destructive force in his dramatic poem *The British Enchanters: Or, No Magic Like Love* (1701):

When Love's away then Discord reigns
 The Furies he unchains
 Bids Aeolus unbind
 The Northern Wind,
 That fetter'd lay in Caves,
 And root up Trees, and plough the Plain,
 Old Ocean frets and raves,
 From their deep Roots the Rocks he tears,
 Whole Deluges he lets fly,
 That dash against the Sky,
 And seem to drown the Stars,
 Th'assaulted Clouds return the Shock
 Blue Lightnings singe the Waves,
 And Thunder rends the Rock.⁶

In William Shakespeare's play *King John*, the North Wind represents the cold:

And none of you will bid the winter come
 To thrust his icy fingers in my maw,
 Nor let my kingdom's rivers take their course
 Through my burned bosom, nor entreat the north
 To make his bleak winds kiss my parched lips
 And comfort me with cold.⁷

⁵ Prosperi, *Giustizia bendata*, pp. 34–36.

⁶ Lord Lansdowne, 'Ode to Discord' in *The British Enchanters: Or, No Magic Like Love*, Act II, Scene I, pp. 267–68.

⁷ Shakespeare, *King John*, v.vii. 36–41.

In *Othello*, however, the North is an image of liberty and freedom, and of something impossible to control:

‘Twill out, ‘twill out. I peace?
No, I will speak as liberal as the north;
Let heaven, and men, and devils, let them all,
All, all cry shame against me, yet I’ll speak.⁸

The idea of North as strong and free is reflected in other writings as well. Cesare Ripa in his *Iconologia* (1603) describes the North as Septentrione.⁹ Ripa’s North is an older man, proud looking, tall, and muscular. He is a virile man, robust and ‘full of meat’. Ripa says that the North is generally depicted as having fair complexion, blonde hair, cerulean blue eyes, and wearing white armour, with one hand always ready to draw his sword. All of these physical assets are explained by the cold northern climate supposedly giving people a better stomach and improving their digestion. Septentrione is also war loving and insensitive to pain and death — the latter statement referring to Petrarch:

Nemica naturalmente di pace,
Nasce una gente à cui il morir non dole.¹⁰

(Natural enemy to peace,
A people is born to which death does not hurt).

Uniting these different aspects and perceptions of the evil and untameable North is the southern viewpoint. Referring to a place as physically being in an entirely different or opposite direction than the subject reinforces the otherness; the place is defined in the eyes of the other, and made ‘Other’ and different. In the case of the North, that defining spectator is often southern Europe. As Matti Klinge points out,

To speak of a part of the world as being north, south, east, or west, implies of course a relation to some other part. In the Nordic world, that relation is primarily to continental Europe. It is in relation to Europe that the North sees itself as poor and peripheral, and often as young and parvenu.¹¹

⁸ Shakespeare, *Othello*, v.ii. 217–220.

⁹ Ripa, *Iconologia*, pp. 497–98.

¹⁰ Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, Poem 28, ll. 50–51.

¹¹ Klinge, ‘Aspects of the Nordic Self’, p. 260.

The North was thus always relational and, as such, set the parameters for descriptions and images of encounters between North and South. These images, as we shall see, could be used equally both for and against the North and its inhabitants.

Early Modern Images of the North: Inferior Intellects in the Cold

From the Italian point of view, the notion of the North, or Septentrione, was extremely complex, and it varied substantially over time. First of all, the concept of the North was vast in Italy and indicated not a geographical North, but rather an anthropological and religious North. The North coincided with the *Ultramontanes*, all the different peoples living on the other side of the Alps. No clear cultural or spatial distinction can be perceived between Germany and Scandinavia; on the contrary, the latter seems rather to be merged into the former. The North in the early modern period was not particularly significant in Italian culture, and moral assessment in encounters with Northern people remained ambiguous.¹²

Before the rupture caused by the Protestant Reformation, the North represented both negative and positive values. Undoubtedly, elements such as the barbarism of the people living there, the poor hygiene, and the systematic recourse of bad food were underlined. However, according to the Late Medieval interpretations of climate theory, the Nordic peoples were also characterized by a number of positive particularities. The vision of the North and its inhabitants as 'other' and barbarian was founded on two major theories linked to each other: climate theory and the notable theory of humours.¹³

Climate theory was established in the early modern period largely as a result of Bodin's *Six livres de la Republique* (1567). Bodin drew on the thoughts of Hippocrates and Aristotle in order to explain the differences among the peoples and their customs. Hippocrates had divided the known world into three zones (hot, cold, and temperate), a tripartite that had an enduring success over time. According to Greek thought, the inhabitants of the North were by nature predestined for freedom, while the ones in the South were destined for slavery. The northerners were proud but also too wild; hence their anarchist tendencies. The inhabitants of the South, however, were smart but lazy, and easily let

¹² Pastore Stocchi, 'Il mito del Nord nella letteratura dell'Umanesimo'.

¹³ De Anna, *Il mito del Nord*. See also Langum, 'Cold Characters', in this volume.

themselves be dominated by tyrants. Accordingly, it was up to the temperate zone to establish an ideal mix between these two realities.

The Renaissance humanists attributed such privilege to the Latin countries and eventually also to France. Bodin in particular tried to use the climate theory to explain the characters of the peoples and their different inclinations.¹⁴ The man from the North was brutal, wild, silent, but pure. The man from the South was led by philosophy, mathematics, and magic. He was capable of meditation and was religious, yet at the same time he was volatile, crafty, and vindictive. In the temperate zone the men were vigorous, but they were definitely less feral, a consequence of their balanced 'humours' that the inhabitants in the Latin countries could enjoy thanks to a privileged geographical position. Hence the spirit of 'civilization' of Europe (and in particular France) was born — a civilization that 'the barbarians' of the North could observe while being aware that they could never come near it. Such a civilization had to be imposed since, if left on their own, the northerners would not be able to find sufficient cohesion to pull them out of barbarism. Being too phlegmatic, they needed a guide. They were strong and vigorous, but their mental capacities were limited. The Latins, on the contrary, were of a lower stature and a less impressive bodily constitution, but their intellectual capacities were enormously superior. Moreover, the North had not produced anything that could compete on an intellectual level with the literary production of the Italian, Spanish, and, above all, French worlds. The Nordic languages were simply too full of consonants and palatals to be suitable for poetry.¹⁵

Such a view was similar to the Arabic concept of the 'barbaric'. From the ninth century onwards, Arab culture developed a climate theory with many similarities to the Aristotelian theory. The image of Northern Europe as prey to wilderness and in a primitive state started to find its way into the Mediterranean along the Islamic coasts. Arabic authors insisted that the inhabitants of Moldavia did not know the art of living in stable homes, but rather lived in the forests and systematically ate all foreigners who dared approach their world; the primitive, forest-dwelling Norwegians were characterized by the fact that their head was attached directly to their back, since they lacked a neck. They

¹⁴ Siraisi, *History, Medicine, and the Traditions of Renaissance Learning*, p. 58.

¹⁵ See especially Borca, *Luoghi, corpi, costumi*; Arcangeli, *Daide o Salomè?*, in particular pp. 235–40; and Arcangeli, 'Fonti europee e cultura arabo-islamica'. Also important is Jones, 'The Image of the Barbarian in Medieval Europe'. For a new insight: Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama*, in particular pp. 23–47.

hid among the trees and carved shelters inside the trees to find refuge; the use of the sauna was interpreted as an escape from the freezing winter.¹⁶

The absence of light was a crucial element: it indicated a lack of a fundamental balance in nature and, therefore, in men. These humans became almost bestial. For example, it was not possible to trade directly with the Finns, since they could not stand the sight of other people. When someone wanted to exchange slaves or furs for swords, they could not meet them directly; instead, they left the goods in a designated place and returned to see if the Finns had left a sufficient compensation. If the exchange had not been satisfactory, the goods were returned according to the same principles.¹⁷

Over the course of the early modern period, however, the classical interpretation of climate theory began to crack, due to the new role assumed by the North in European politics and religion.¹⁸ From the seventeenth century onwards, it was no longer possible to ignore the ‘civilization’ of cultures in Germany and England. As count and diplomat Lorenzo Magalotti, who visited Sweden in 1668, declared in his book *Relazione sulla Svezia* (Report on Sweden), the Swedes were definitely gifted with a ‘natural roughness’.¹⁹ If left to fend for themselves, the inhabitants of this area would manifest all their limitations:

gli Svezzesi in generale sieno facili a credere, e forse più de’ Tedeschi; testimonio ne può essere l’opinione che vi corre delle tante stregonerie che in quelle parti si facciano, onde a questo conto abbruciano senza discrezione uomini e donne, ed in particolare le vecchie e le più brutte. Mai si discorre d’altro che delle stregonerie delle province settentrionali, come di Norvegia, [di] Dalarne e della Lapponia.²⁰

(The Swedes in general are naïve, and perhaps even more so than the Germans: a testimony of this may be the common view on the multitude of witchcrafts that are to be found in these parts, in which they burn men and women without discretion, and in particular the old and the ugliest ones. One never hears of other things than witchcraft from the northern provinces, such as Norway, Dalarna, and Lapland.)

¹⁶ Al-Azmeh, ‘Barbarians in Arab Eyes’.

¹⁷ Al-Azmeh, ‘Barbarians in Arab Eyes’, pp. 11–13. For further notions of characteristics of the Finns, see de Angelo’s essay in this volume.

¹⁸ This reconsideration might have been parallel to the attention paid by the scientific literature in confronting the idea of the North. For this question, which can not be further developed here, see the important contribution by Ruiju, *Les Récits de voyage aux pays froids*.

¹⁹ Magalotti, *Relazioni di viaggio in Inghilterra, Francia e Svezia*, p. 288.

²⁰ Magalotti, *Relazioni di viaggio in Inghilterra, Francia e Svezia*, p. 291.

Magalotti was frustrated by the political ineptitude of many Swedes:

Oltre all'esser creduli sono gravi, sospettosi ed altieri, e senza segreto, pigri e tardi al venire alla conclusione di quello che hanno da fare. Pretendono ricompensa d'ogni minima cosa [...]. Sono irresoluti, né da loro si sente mai una risposta categorica, fra la gente eziandio con politica, trasportati dal genio di far mistero d'ogni cosa: il che arriva a tal segno che vuolci un gran negoziato a fargli risolvere a andare a desinare con alcuno, eppure è certissimo che mostrano maggior senso, che in niun'altra cosa, nel mangiare e nel bere.²¹

(Apart from being credulous, the Swedes are also serious, suspicious and arrogant, and without secrets; they are lazy and late to reach a conclusion in what they have to do. They claim reward for every smallest thing [...]. They are irresolute, one never hears a categorical answer from them, among the people also in politics, carried by the spirit to create a problem out of everything: it comes to a point where it takes a major negotiation to make him go and have dinner with someone, and still he demonstrates a good sense, as in no other case, when it comes to eating and drinking.)

The Swedes were also 'vain', spenders of public resources, and so on. His merciless descriptions reinforced the barbarity of a people.

But Magalotti also paints a picture of shifting colours, since in Sweden one could also find 'uomini di savio e discreto avvedimento, egualmente capaci nel negozio e nell'armi, ed insomma atti a governare' (men of sage and discreet foresight, equally capable in trade as in arms, and hence fit to rule). Their barbarity was much attenuated by the 'application to studies' symbolized by the country's university system. In this case, the 'natural inclinations' of the North were overcome thanks to the 'culture'. According to Magalotti, the image of the Swedes was about to change, as Sweden was 'una nazione assai diversa da quelle che ne la figurano le storie e le tradizioni' (a nation very different from these in stories and traditions). Before, 'non si valutava [...] di questa nazione altro che un valore spinoso e salvatico' (this nation [...] was not given any other value than a thorny and wild one), while now qualities were recognized that would never have been attributed to people living 'somewhere beyond 50 degrees'. Hence, there were Swedes who were 'polite', 'spiritual', 'learned', and 'well mannered'. A growing number of people had started to envy 'la lor prudenza e gli credano capaci di far col consiglio tutto o poco meno di quello che hanno saputo fare coll'armi' (their prudence, and they thought them capable of doing with counsel all or little less than they had done with weapons.).²²

²¹ Magalotti, *Relazioni di viaggio in Inghilterra, Francia e Svezia*, p. 295.

²² Magalotti, *Relazioni di viaggio in Inghilterra, Francia e Svezia*, p. 296.

Magalotti's analysis is interesting for many reasons. First, while drawing on the theory of climates, Magalotti also distances himself from it, underlining the role of culture and of acquired abilities. In other words, the civilizing role of history and the possibility to change creates an idea of possible progress. Second, Magalotti pays attention to the particular. He moves away from the assumptions of a common identity of the North by paying attention to the diversities and this gives further credence to the suggestion that cultural and political elements might have a greater impact than human nature. For example, he notes, there were huge differences between Sweden and Denmark. Magalotti tells a story to prove it:

quello che qua dicono gli Svezzezi: cioè che Dio, creando il mondo, fatta la Danimarca, stracco dalla gran fatica, ordinasse al diavolo che si scapricciasse ancor egli in fare un paese a suo modo e suo favorito, ond'egli fece la Svezia, della quale ridendosi Iddio disse che non voleva disfare il fatto ma, per ridurre le cose ad uguaglianza, si risolvè di fare egli gl'uomini alla Svezia, e che 'l diavolo facesse quelli di Danimarca.²³

(this that is said here about the Swedes: that God, while creating the world, was finished with Denmark and was struck by a heavy fatigue, and ordered the Devil to create a country in his preferred way, after which the Devil created Sweden, which made God laugh and say that he didn't wish to undo this but, to balance things, he decided to create the people in Sweden, and that the devil should create those in Denmark.)

Although in the humanist tradition of northern Italy, the North was generally an indistinct gathering of territories with common climate and cultural characteristics, there were also areas in which such blurred images became more specified. Fields connected to technical and practical knowledge, rather than those connected with the literary tradition, were particularly permeated by new knowledge. In fact, from the Middle Ages onwards, missions directed towards the North Sea had occupied missionaries who could observe up close the difference between real life and life as it was depicted in classical texts. Despite this increase of information, the idea of the North continued to be based more on imagined geography than on concrete knowledge. It was as if there was a parallel North, another place, where projections and fantasies could be settled.

²³ Magalotti, *Relazioni di viaggio in Inghilterra, Francia e Svezia*, p. 321.

The Evil North and its Religious Effects

The North in early modern Europe represented a broad variety of assumed qualities and beliefs: cold, dark, isolate, infertile, remote, out of control, war-loving, barbarian, home to physically superior yet intellectually weak inhabitants, and a place for magic, witches, sorcerers, and other magical creatures — and, accordingly, a natural home for heresy to thrive.²⁴ The Reformation fitted well into this idea of the North. One of the most detailed accounts of the various kinds of magic and heresies existing in the northern parts of Europe in the sixteenth century was written by the exiled Swedish bishop Olaus Magnus, in his famous history of the Nordic peoples, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (1555). In Rome, escaping the Lutheran regime in his country, he urged the Catholic Church to reconvert Sweden to the old faith. Details of ancient magic and terrible monsters served to make the North exotic and heathen.

Diplomatic accounts and other archival sources from seventeenth-century Italy describing the North paint a picture of a hostile, cold, and uncivilized territory, where the question of religion (or lack thereof) is recurrent.²⁵ When an anonymous author made an attempt to summarize the state of (Catholic) Christianity and the number of faithful in Europe in the year 1686, he described the northern countries as vast, unpopulated, partially covered with snow and ice all year round, mostly impossible to cultivate, and hence an uninhabitable territory:

Il Regno di Noruegia, e di Suetia comprendendoui l'Islanda, la Liuonia, e l'Ingria sono di una gran stenduta, ma cose spopolate per quanto si è osseruato, che quasi non si può credere. Non ui sono che Montagne inhabitabili, e perpetuamente coperte di Neue, e di giacci, et essendoui di molti Laghi, e uastità di Selue con pochissime Terre fertili, & coltiuabili.²⁶

(The kingdoms of Norway and Sweden including Iceland, Livonia, and Ingria, are widely extended but so scarcely populated, from what can be observed, that it is hardly impossible to believe. There is nothing else but inhabitable mountains, eternally covered in snow and ice, and there are many lakes, and vast fields with very little fertile soil possible to cultivate.)

²⁴ See also DeAngelo's essay in this volume on the heresies and witchcraft identified in Scotland as a northern place.

²⁵ On the entire subject, see De Anna, *Il mito del Nord*.

²⁶ Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Miscellanea Atti diversi Manoscritti, 82:g (no foliation), *Descrizione dello Stato della religione Christiana*.

He added that there are a few Catholics in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, but they are of such small number that it is useless to count them; the other three million souls said to live in the region were assumed to be Protestants.

Because of the Reformation, considerations related to religious affiliation, the climate, and the 'nature' of the Nordic men and women were judged morally. The 'damned lands' of the North had embraced the Reformation. The evil wind that wanted to destroy the Church and the religion continued to blow. The Jesuit Domenico Bernini was very explicit on this point in his *Historia di tutte l'heresie* (*History of All Heresies*). *Historia* is an important work since it constitutes the reflections of a cleric without engaging in high theological arguments, and can therefore be viewed as representative of a rather common and widespread way of seeing things. It was published for the first time in 1657 and was republished in a small number of editions up to 1723. From the North, 'si scaricasse il fulmine sopra l'alto pinnacolo del Tempio di Dio' (one thunderbolt after the other in the pinnacle of the Temple of God) struck.²⁷ According to this interpretation, the role of the North was not passive — it was a culture that in its roughness had provided shelter to Lutheran and Calvinist ideas.²⁸

Tommaso Campanella very profoundly connected the source of the Reformation to the anthropological character of the northern people. The northerners, he wrote, had an undomesticable nature that could not stand restrictions. The Church of Rome had virtuously elaborated a series of prescriptions commanding 'astinenze, digiuno, castità e cose simili, che impediscono i piaceri e la buona cera' (abstinence, fasting, chastity and similar things, which prevent pleasures and the healthy appearance); the peoples of the North, however, being 'essendo veglino facili a lasciarsi trasportare dai loro affetti, non fu difficile cosa spingerli a questa libertà di vivere' (easily carried away by their affects, were easily urged to this freedom of living).²⁹ Therefore, 'senza pensarvi' (without thinking of it), it happened that they welcomed the Reformation and the teachings of Luther and Calvin,

I quali insegnano che l'uomo non ha libertà di volere il bene e il male, ma che Iddio opera nell'uomo e l'uno e l'altro e perciò facilmente si persuadono non consistere in loro arbitrio il bere e il puttaneggiare.³⁰

²⁷ Bernini, *Historia di tutte l'heresie*, II, 365.

²⁸ Bernini, *Historia di tutte l'heresie*, IV, 305, 563.

²⁹ Campanella, *Discorso sui Paesi Bassi*, p. 67.

³⁰ Campanella, *Discorso sui Paesi Bassi*, p. 67.

(They who teach that man does not have a freedom to want the good or the bad, but that God works in man and one and the other and therefore easily were persuaded not to persist in their lust for drinking and whoring.)

The North as an indistinct idea was replaced for the first time within the Italian territories in the 1620s, thanks to Sweden's participation in the Thirty Years' War. Italy at the time was flooded by an enormous quantity of newspapers, journals, and handwritten sheets that accounted for the theatre of war and provided opportunities for readers of all levels in society to know the protagonists in the conflict. Here, religious affiliation ended up in conflict with the political sphere.³¹

The North provided powerful images to build on for an aspiring power such as Sweden. Academic works and debates stressed claims of being the origin of the civilized world from the Goths up to the seventeenth century, not least in Uppsala.³² At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the eschatological expectations of the Lion of Midnight, which would emerge out of the long dark season of the North, were made widespread through a circulating text attributed to the physician and alchemist Theophrastus Paracelsus. The Lion of Midnight was predicted to defeat the Eagle (the Habsburg emperor, and thus the Catholics) and lay the whole world at his feet before Christ returned. The Lion of Midnight was presented as a key character in the Apocalypse, and as such, a rewarding image to translate into contemporary politics by transforming it to the Lion of the North, the emblematic image adapted by Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years' War.³³

Images of the Lion of the North were picked up in Italy for political purposes. The case of Venice is instructive here. During the first half of the seventeenth century, the government of the Republic of Venice was engaged in a jurisdictional fight with the Pope. Venice was very suspicious of Rome's attempts to extend its protection not only in the religious but also in the politi-

³¹ Infelise, *Prima dei giornali*.

³² Johannesson, *Gotisk Renässans*; Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria*, pp. 235–57. See also Stefan Donecker's chapter in this volume on the North as the *vagina nationum*.

³³ Donecker, 'The Lion, the Witch and the Walrus'. Later in the seventeenth century, King Charles XI chose the Polar Star as his symbol. The Polar Star is not overwhelming or spectacular in the same way as the Sun, the well-established symbol for Charles XI's contemporary Louis XIV, but rather pale and cold. It does not change shape, as does the Ottoman crescent. However, it has one important quality: it is constant. It never moves, and it does not disappear every night, but it is reliable, stable, and unchangeable, values of utter importance for a great power in decline.

cal sphere. Thus diplomatic contacts were extremely strained, and the Venetian government undertook a number of initiatives that marked the autonomy of the Republic in the ecclesiastical as well as in the political field. This standpoint apparently created hostility in meetings held with Rome's main ally, Spain, and was made evident in attitudes towards the North, which, in these decades, was no longer regarded as a religious enemy but rather as a political model. According to many Venetian rulers, Gustavus Adolphus incarnated the prototype of an absolute monarch, but most of all a 'total' concept of power: the Protestant countries in general appeared to have succeeded in keeping the Church and the State on separate tracks, but the State was the main actor in controlling the Church.³⁴ It was a position that could take extreme forms: at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Nicolò Contarini, who would become doge, wrote in his *Venetian Histories* that even the Turks could be envied because there were no theologians among them, and the government could use religion as an instrument for social control with State and Church coinciding. The dream of an autonomous ecclesiastical government model resulted in the abandonment of the climate theory in favour of a political-religious geography in which the North could serve as example.³⁵

It is interesting to notice the continuing fluctuation within Italian culture between exoticization of the North, with a condemnation of its costumes and inhabitants as inclined to barbarism on one hand, and the Edenic and primitivistic dimension on the other. In particular, before the Reformation a sort of 'primitivistic myth' of Nordic virtue circulated for a long time in Italian culture. According to scholar Manlio Pastore Stocchi, Italian Humanism was prone to condemn the 'sensual and dizzying weaknesses of the most sunny climates'. Although this was not the view of the majority, it was nonetheless present, and it clashed with a separate tendency to hold the Nordic people responsible for the fall of the Roman Empire and the following civil decadence.³⁶

In this context, the diffusion of the *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* by Olaus Magnus, written in close contact with the Italian environment (and in particular the Venetian one), is strongly motivated by preoccupations of religious character.³⁷ It encouraged a widespread notion of a North steeped with obscure, pagan, and superstitious beliefs. Olaus Magnus's book became — no

³⁴ Spini, *Ricerca dei libertini*.

³⁵ Barbierato, *The Inquisitor in the Hat Shop*, pp. 118–19.

³⁶ Pastore Stocchi, *Il mito del Nord*, pp. 50–52.

³⁷ Olaus Magnus, *Historia om de nordiska folken*.

matter the various intentions of the author — a sort of reservoir from which to draw a rich repertoire of beliefs that served to satisfy the primitivistic appetites of many educated elites: the success of Nordic locations in dramas and literary works in which vendetta, blood, and death formed the leitmotif shows the reach of Olaus Magnus's ideas.³⁸

The Evil Wind of the North

Queen Christina of Sweden, daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, and regent from her father's death in 1632 to 1654 when she converted to Roman Catholicism, strategically deployed the concept of the North by connecting it to her intellectual and cultural interests. The fact that the daughter of the famous Protestant King chose to become a Catholic and set up her court in Rome obviously made playing with the North–South metaphors even more thrilling and fruitful.

The founder of several academies and the patron of the arts and sciences, Christina was noticed and mostly admired in the intellectual circles and courts of Europe. The Queen's close association with the North was ever present in her public appearances in Europe. She became referred to as the Minerva of the North, since she was the daughter of the Lion of the North (Gustavus Adolphus) and — employing metaphors from Greek mythology — she moved Parnassus (the home of the Muses) to cold Thule, transforming Stockholm into the Athens of the North.³⁹

Ambiguous notions of Queen Christina and the North led to clashes between cultures and traditions as she travelled in southern Europe, especially with regards to non-Catholic beliefs and their northerly origins. When Pope Alexander VII prepared for Queen Christina to arrive in Rome in December 1655, he was careful with the details. Since the abdicated queen could not be immediately installed in Palazzo Farnese at the time of her arrival, she was granted a provisory apartment within the Vatican. The apartment was not in the Papal palace but in the tower called *Torre dei Venti*, the Tower of the Winds. The eight rooms in this astronomic observatory were decorated with frescoes depicting, among other motives, representations of the four winds. The pope inspected the apartment in person to make sure everything was in perfect order. Upon his request, the biblical motto on the northern wall, *Omne malum ab Aquilone* (All evil comes from the North), was hastily painted over with a

³⁸ For this point, see Selmi, 'Oloa Magno nella letteratura del Cinquecento'.

³⁹ Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria*, pp. 200–03.

thick layer of paint to avoid the risk of offending the prominent guest.⁴⁰ This rushed coverage and makeover of a wall was also a metaphorical act: a major change of identity was taking place, with some elements needing to be publicly eradicated while others could be usefully retained. Although the North had persistently been associated with the brave, dangerous, powerful, savage, bold, and evil, Christina's visit forced a quite literal cover-up of such evil associations.

During a stay at the court in Ferrara on her way to Rome after her abdication of the Swedish throne, Queen Christina attended a performance of the moral drama *L'Oritia*. The play was written by Almerico Passarelli especially for this occasion. It dramatized a romance between a nymph, Oritia, and the North Wind, Borea (Figure 13.3).⁴¹ In the second scene of the play, Borea takes on the disguise of a beautiful youth and approaches the desired nymph, saying:

Il mio rigido aspetto
Con più vaga riforma
Cangiato hò in questa forma;
Che resti Amor non vuole
Un neuoso Aquilone in faccia al Sole⁴²

(My rigid face | in a graceful way | I have changed into this shape | Love doesn't
want | a snowy Northern Wind | in front of the Sun)

The choice of this classical theme for a play in honour of the northern queen on her journey to a new life in the South is ambiguous. Is the queen supposed to be identified with the nymph fleeing from the evil and violent North, or is some of the forcefulness and enigmatic exoticness of the North to be held in her favour? In the context of this chapter, however, our main focus is on the recurrent usefulness of climate metaphors and the use as markers of opposites: in the love theme in the classical story, leading to Boreas raping Oritia, for example, the stiff and snowy Northern Wind encounters the warm sun and needs to change his appearance in order not to scare the loved one away.

The North and its wind was a source of evil and heresy. In 1687, in a work dedicated to Christina of Sweden, the Jesuit Nicolò Maria Pallavicino gave a plain example of the North as the source of heresy. In the author's opinion, the prediction 'Ab Aquilone pandetur malum' (from the north comes evil) defined very well the war between Hell and the Church, through Luther and Calvin.

⁴⁰ Garstein, *Rome and the Counter-Reformation in Scandinavia*, p. 758.

⁴¹ Garstein, *Rome and the Counter-Reformation in Scandinavia*, pp. 753–54.

⁴² Passarelli, *Oritia*, pp. 43–44.



Figure 13.3: Peter Paul Rubens, *Boreas abducting Oreithyia*. Vienna, Akademie der bildenden Künste. 1620. Reproduced with permission from Akademie der Bildenden Künste Wien.

Moreover, in his opinion all heresies derived ‘ab aquilone’ (from the North), ‘perché il lor principale architetto è il superbo regnatore del mitico Aquilone, cioè il Demonio’ (since their principal architect is the sovereign ruler of the mythological Aquilone, namely the Devil). Citing and interpreting the letters of Saint Augustine rather liberally, Pallavicino let the North personalize the reign of Satan, where ‘ne paesi Aquilonari assoldó le più feroci, e numerose Centurie di Ribelli’ (in the aquilonarian countries, he engaged the most fierce and numerous centurions of rebels). Certainly, it was not the first time that

heresy had struck the Church, but whereas previous heresies — like Arianism, Donatism, or Manichaeism — had come from the South and questioned just one aspect of doctrine, this time a heresy had come from the North that summoned all previous heresies from Hell. These poured, like rivers and streams, into the great sea of Lutheranism. Aquilone, the North, could be nothing but the house of evil.⁴³

But the Northern Wind, as the Jesuit Luigi Albrizio preached in the mid-seventeenth century, was something more: ‘the name of Aquilone signifies the devil’. The North was not just the house of the devil, but the devil itself.⁴⁴ This was evident also in 1583, when Ippolito Caracciolo roused the crowds in a Milanese piazza by stating, ‘Per Aquilone intendi tu la fede del diavolo, intendi il peccato’ (by Aquilone, you mean faith in the devil, you mean sin).⁴⁵ To give up the South of Grace meant turning to the North of Satan. These were the remains of a widespread topos that had featured in Italian homiletics since the Middle Ages. In 1305, Fra’ Giordano had explained to the faithful gathered in Santa Maria Novella in Florence that the Northern wind is ‘il Demonio che dàe seccitadi e freddura d’amore di Dio, e del prossimo’ (a demon who brings dryness and coldness in the love of God and neighbour).⁴⁶

Homiletics contained an element of particular importance for the spread of a negative and hostile image of the idea of the North. A true star such as Girolamo Savonarola, who roused the masses with his sermons, invoked the North Wind by repeating the famous visions by Zacharias adapted to a vast and heterogeneous audience:

O, O, O, fuge de terra aquilins, Egli venne uno spirito grande a questo propheta et gridò tre volte, O, o, o, fugitevi della terra di Aquilone [...]. O sacerdoti, o religiosi, o seculari, fugite dalla terra di aquiline, fate penitentia. O cittadini, o donne, o fanciulli, fugite della terra di aquiline, venite a Christo. O grandi, o mezzani, o piccolo, fugite de terra aquilonis, fugitevi da vitii, et fate penitentia.⁴⁷

(Oh, Oh, Oh, flee from the land of the northern wind, He was a great spirit and this prophet cried three time, Oh, oh, oh, flee from the land of the northern wind [...]. Oh priests, oh religious, oh seculars, flee from the land of the northern wind,

⁴³ Pallavicino, *Difesa del pontificato romano e della Chiesa cattolica*, II, 5–7.

⁴⁴ Albrizio, *Prediche fatte nel palazzo apostolico*, I, 38.

⁴⁵ Caracciolo, *Prediche, appresso Iacomo Antonio Somascho*, p. 308.

⁴⁶ Da Rivalto, *Predice del beato fra’ Giordano da Rivalto*, p. 198.

⁴⁷ Savonarola, ‘Predica del mercoledì dopo la domenica di Quaresima’, in *Prediche deuotissime et piene de diuini mysterii*.

repent. Oh citizens, oh women, oh girls, flee from the land of the northern wind, come to Christ. Oh grand, oh medium, oh small, flee from the northern wind, flee for your life, and repent.)

The North Wind and the North represented not only physical elements, but also a wider idea. For Savonarola, the northern wind was symbolic, a moral desolation described in a crude and material language that did not fail to touch his listeners. The northern wind, 'furious and cold', was opposed to the 'nice and warm' southern wind, with the latter being signs of opulence.

But this cold wind that had blown from the North and dried out the consciences of the faithful, driving them to abandon the Church of Rome, had in fact, according to the Jesuit Tommaso Reina, increased the appreciation of the South by the Church, which had had the ability to renew itself and to become even more splendid.⁴⁸ The continuing transfer from the moral to the material dimension was a common rhetorical strategy. The metaphorical use of the wind and desolation, of the rigidity and the sterility provoked by this, was bound to set off associations in the popular imagination.

Altogether, there was no doubt: 'per l'aquilone, horrido e freddo, s'intende l'inferno, che ogni cosa distrugge e consuma' (for the Northern Wind, terrible and cold, hell awaits, which destroys and consumes everything).⁴⁹ It was nature's plan to demonstrate that the evil came from the North. According to the Jesuit Marcello di Lauro, evil from the North had a long history. Mentioning the barbarian peoples that had crushed the Roman Empire, he asked:

che bisogna dir di più? Di quanti emuli di Lucifero alzarono il foglio su l'Aquilone a gran fatica trovarete alcuno, a cui dir non si possa 'quomodo cecidisti de caelo Lucifer qui mane oriebaris?'⁵⁰

(What more needs to be said? Out of all imitators of Lucifer who lifted the sheet of the northern wind, you will find it most difficult to find any, of which cannot be said 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning?')

In Italy, the state of things described above lasted until the end of eighteenth century. On the one hand, the world had started expanding in an uncontrollable way. On the other, the development of cultural awareness and territorial pride such as that expressed by the Germans or the English would cause a crisis

⁴⁸ Reina, *Prediche quaresimali di Tomaso Reina*, p. 416.

⁴⁹ Inchino, *Prediche sopra i quattro novissimi*, pp. 292–93.

⁵⁰ Di Lauro, *Prediche per la Quaresima*. The biblical reference is obviously Isaiah 14. 12.

in a climatological and religious system. The economic and cultural development in the 'ultramontane' area would force the world to redefine itself and its geography.

The notion of the North as evil was invoked throughout the early modern period in Italy and clearly impacted North–South encounters, in particular after the Reformation. These encounters should, of course, be further explored, particularly in uncovering the presumptions and concepts of both the North and South made visible in the encounters, and the parallels and reversed conditions in Italy and Sweden at the time. We have shown that the North was characterized as evil by Italians, but how were these deeply rooted notions used more concretely in religion and politics, and how did they affect relationships and encounters? What was permitted and what was forbidden in contacts? Deterrent, moralizing, artistically inspiring, or a scapegoat for things gone bad: the evil qualities of the North through history as we have seen are multiple and complex, but perhaps most of all — they have proven useful.

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ELEVATING THE EARLY MODERN NORTH: THE CASE OF THE FAROE ISLANDS

Kim Simonsen

The North has always been seen as a mythical land, and it has captured imaginations throughout Western history, as seen in the works of Virgil, Seneca, Dicuil, Adam of Bremen, J. W. von Goethe and the German Romanticists, and even Edgar Allen Poe and American Gothic writers. Explorers such as Ross, Peary, Nansen, and Knud Rasmussen have also been captivated by the image of the North.¹

In this chapter I will focus on a small region of the Far North and how it was represented in early modern times: the Faroe Islands. I investigate how the islands were seen by topographers, travellers, and writers to elevate the general image of the North. A key thought in this chapter is that identities are determined by exchange and recognition. The ‘imagological prism’ I have selected as my methodology deals with these long-standing divisions: North–South, centre–periphery, utopian–dystopian, and barbarian–civilized.

Ultima Thule (see Figure 14.1, in which Iceland is called *Thyle*), like the myths of Avalon, Atlantis, and El Dorado, has lived on in the imagination of Europeans.² Pytheas of Massalia was one of the first to go looking for it, back

¹ Hastrup, ‘Images of Thule’, p. 114.

² Davidson, *The Idea of North*, pp. 22–23. See also the chapters by Webb and Avdagic in this volume for discussions of the ancient idea of Thule.

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in the third century BCE. In Greek mythology, the land of the North Wind Boreas was closely connected with the cult of Apollo, representing a paradise as opposed to the underworld of Tartaros in the South. At the same time, it was seen as a cold and frightening region. In this way, the North has had a rather ambivalent image.³

Literary scholar Peter Davidson outlines two opposing ideas of North that repeat and even contradict each other. The North is imagined both as a place of darkness, death, and the seat of evil from European antiquity to the time of the nineteenth century, and as a place of felicity with virtuous, happy people.⁴ Pytheas of Massilia wrote about the people of the North and the people of *ultima Thule* as the 'Hyppoder' (or, as they are called in other texts, the Hyperboreans). Usually, they were described as being three metres tall and part of a mythic, primitive, and exotic race defined by its remoteness and the North Wind. According to old folk legends in the Faroes, these people were shaped like horses and had magic powers. The idea of the North as a place of purification and escape from the limitations of civilization first appeared in the work of early writers and was echoed in eighteenth and nineteenth century works.⁵

The Imagology of the North

The imagologist Manfred Beller has argued that our ways of seeing and judging are conditioned by preconceived notions, prejudice, and stereotypes.⁶ There is no 'primordial' or 'pristine encounter' according to which everybody can agree upon a common description of a group or a nation. Images are literary and discursive conventions, rather than social realities.⁷ This means that they are imagined, rather than empirical facts that we can test.

Literature and literary sources can have an especially long currency. Joep Leerssen sees literature, cinema, and cartoons as privileged genres for the dissemination of stereotypes. These images are especially seen in characterological and collective explanations of cultural differences in literary and cultural history. Thus modern imagology is the study of the cultural representation of

³ Arndt, *Imagologie des Nordens*, p. 387; Davidson, *The Idea of North*, p. 21.

⁴ Davidson, *The Idea of North*, p. 21.

⁵ Davidson, *The Idea of North*, p. 21.

⁶ Beller, 'Perception, Image, Imagology', p. 4.

⁷ Beller and Leerssen, 'Forward', p. xiv.

national stereotypes.⁸ The nationality represented, called the 'spected', is silhouetted in the representing text or discourse (the 'spectant'). Imagologists are particularly interested in the dynamics between images that characterize the Other (hetero-images) and one's own domestic self-identity. Images can revalorize, as, for example, when the 'savage' becomes the 'noble savage' whose lack of manners is made up for by honesty and closeness to a true authentic nature. The image can therefore change back and forth, as in the case of Germany, once considered a boring country, then a country of artists and romantics, then once again a nation of obedient soulless people engaged in Nazism for the first half of the twentieth century.⁹ When dealing with ambivalent long-term clichés, or with extremely conflicting stereotypes, these can be seen as two sides of the same coin, as in the German example: the land of poets and philosophers, as well as tyrants. Of special interest is the dynamics between a hetero-image and the self-image of a nation. Imagological discourses are especially concerned with the characterological explanations of cultural difference.¹⁰

An imagined discourse singles out a nation and gives it a set of different characteristics, which makes it 'typical'. This is generally put into a collective-psychological motivation for these given social or national features. In order to do so for the case of the Faroe Islands, in this chapter I look at the background trope and the intertext of the given national representation, and consider how these relate to history. A trope, however, must be contextualized within a text. It is therefore necessary to establish what sort of text it is and which genre conventions (for example, propaganda, humorous, topographic, or poetic) are at work. The historical contextualization is important here, because literary texts cannot be interpreted out of their time.

It is also important to establish evidence of the text's reception and impact. The study of images is a comparative enterprise, which addresses cross-national relations.¹¹ Self-images and 'othering' can be studied through historical remembrance and cultural memory. The question is to which extent the national self-images have a specific diachronic dimension of selfhood across time.¹² Here it is useful to work with contrasting images of the same nation (imagemes) and to situate certain images of a given country amongst different neighbours (for

⁸ Leerssen, 'Image', p. 342.

⁹ Leerssen, 'Image', p. 342.

¹⁰ Leerseen, 'Imagology'.

¹¹ Leerseen, 'Imagology', pp. 26–29.

¹² Leerseen, 'Imagology', p. 29.

example, the image of Germany in the Netherlands, the image of Iceland in Denmark, and so on).¹³ For this reason, I will draw on parallels between Iceland, the Faroe Islands, and Denmark, as well as the general image of the North.

Within this imagological prism, I will analyse hetero-images and auto-images in relation to contrasting images, and how these relate to background tropes and master-polarities such as North–South, centre–periphery, utopian–dystopian, and barbarian–civilized.

Antiquarianism and Early Modern Topographies

The works examined here fall under the category of travel writing. Travel writing is a general term that covers text types that vary through history, including narratives or non-fictions (for example, travel guidebooks) and fictions such as the travel novel. The ‘genre’ of travel writing can be anything from the more factual account of documentation (for example, a logbook), to more poetic memories of a travel.¹⁴ As the imagologist Albert Meier states, a recurring attribute of travel writing is that it ‘always organizes differences (“familiar” vs. “unfamiliar”) and highlights either the agreement or the divergence between the familiar and the alien, as the case may be (“domestication” vs “alienation”/ “exotification”)’.¹⁵ In this way, travel writing constructs ‘otherness’ or even an exotification from the familiar by use of analogy. Therefore, travel writing often reveals more about the traveller than it does about the depicted areas. This allows the researcher to see the difference between hetero- and auto-images.¹⁶ This also makes travel writing relevant to many areas of study, including imagology, migration, and post-colonial studies.

It is important to remember that not all travel writers were eurocentric intolerant crusaders and imperialists. In my view, European travel writers who went to the Faroe Islands were important because they translated Faroese culture and literature and thus made it accessible to the Republic of Letters. Moreover, Faroese travel writers were also active in translating the genres of travel writing into their own languages. In fact, travel writers and their texts reflect many contemporary ideas about culture, politics, race and poetics.

¹³ See Berger, ‘Narrating the Nation’, for introduction on how stories about national belonging are constructed and change over time.

¹⁴ Meier, ‘Travel Writing’, p. 446.

¹⁵ Meier, ‘Travel Writing’, p. 446.

¹⁶ Meier, ‘Travel Writing’, p. 447.

When travelling in Scandinavia, the Frenchman Jean Bodin (1530–96) wrote that no country in Europe had more witches than Norway. The same discourse is echoed in the book *Des pais septentrionaux* (1671) by Pierre Martin de la Martinière (1634–90), in which he portrays Icelanders as foul, dirty, cruel, and brutal. According to him, most of them are witches, and the volcano Hekla is the entrance to Hell. La Martinière describes Icelanders as uncivilized: ‘The people of Iceland, for the most part, dwell in caverns.’¹⁷ This image is generally used to describe the people and the entire northern periphery.¹⁸ Images of a monstrous North filled with grotesque beings as northern Cynocephali, Skiapodes races of the Greco-Roman canon, giants, trolls, and so on are a rule of early modern Eurocentrism. Ever since the idea of Plinian races (and beyond), the European imagination of everything outside has been used as a distorted marker of exoticism or primitivism.¹⁹ The idea of attributing essential characteristics to certain national or ethnic groups is something we find everywhere. This classificatory urge of aligning cultural differences with ethnic stereotypes was to lead to the systematics of early modern ethnography and anthropology as illustrated, for instance, by the Austrian *Völkertafel* or *Tableau of Nationalities*.

Literature and literary sources can have an especially long currency as privileged genres for the dissemination of long-standing stereotypes. These images are especially seen in characterological and collective explanations of cultural differences in literary and cultural history. An important aspect of this in the early modern era was the search for the nation’s vernacular roots, in contrast to the classical or Christian. Early modern ‘men of letters’, historians, and antiquaries had shown an interest in the medieval past throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²⁰ Of particular interest is the dynamics between images that characterize the Other (hetero-images) and the domestic self-identity. This was combined with an interest in national character and in

¹⁷ Quoted in Sumarliði R. Ísleifsson, ‘Icelandic National Images’, p. 149.

¹⁸ Arndt, *Imagologie des Nordens*, p. 388.

¹⁹ Barraclough and others, ‘Der übernatürliche Norden’. As contributions in this volume show, the ideas did change over time, although Northerners were most often marked as ‘other’.

²⁰ The Oxford University-based project ‘Cultures of Knowledge — Networking the Republic of Letters, 1550–1750’ and the ‘Circulation of Knowledge and Learned Practices in the 17th-Century Dutch Republic’ project, as well as ‘Mapping of the Republic of Letters’ (MRoFL), based at Stanford University, are all working on this subject. ‘Mapping of the Republic of Letters’ has been focusing primarily on visualizing complexity and uncertainty in spatial, temporal, and biographical information.

methods of systematization, leading to the emergence of a European taxonomy of national character. This pattern can be seen, for example, in Julius Caesar Scaliger's *Poetices libri VII* (1561) which is filled with a manic urge to make lists and order and sort matter. It also contains a list of national characteristics: Germans are strong, simple, open, true in friendship and in enmity; Swedes, Norwegians, Greenlanders, and Goths are bestial, as are the Scots and Irish; Englishmen are arrogant and quarrelsome; the French are humane. This comparative systematization was to become influential all over Europe.²¹

Images, of course, do not remain stable — they change over time. Situating the North and Scandinavia within the North in terms of prestige and power, and how it related to the South and more powerful regions of Eurocentric Europe, we can speak of three phases of the history of the image of the North. In the first phase, the North is imagined both as a place of darkness, death, and the seat of evil from European antiquity to the time of the nineteenth century, and as a place of felicity with virtuous happy people. The next phase is the North imitating the South and elevating everything medieval, including the *Ossian cult*, the adoption of Nordic mythology, and de Staël's sublime image of the North. This change provided a new discursive place for the North. The last step in the self-assertion of the North against the South involves the construction of the North as an autonomous space. This phase is sometimes referred to as the 'modernism' of the North. This is the backdrop of the use of Nordic mythology, the fascination with curiosities, such as runes, where early modern scholars were before the national Romantics and sought to elevate the North through the compilation of texts.²²

This relationship between the centre (Southern Europe) and the periphery (Northern Europe) is abstract and has been analysed in a number of disciplines. A periphery or a margin is any area far away from a centre.²³ It can be rural

²¹ Aristotle loosely inspired Scaliger's work and other encyclopaedic texts, and they came to dominate the culture of seventeenth-century classicism.

²² Besides memory and nationalism studies, a major inspiration has been imagological work and modern research into the image of the North. The project 'INOR — Iceland and the Image of the North' has been interesting for me in exploring the original connection between images, nationalism, and the emergence of self-images on the part of groups and nations. Another project, 'Arctic Discourses', was initiated in 2005 in Tromsø, Norway. One other notable project concerned with the study of images of the North is '*Imaginatio borealis*: Perzeption, Rezeption und Konstruktion des Nordens' (Imagining Borealis: The Perception, Reception and Construction of the North) at the University of Kiel, Germany.

²³ Schneider, 'Center/Periphery'. According to Zarycki, countries or even parts of the

and provincial areas of a country's edge — for example, Telemark in Norway or Bornholm in Denmark or the Faroe Islands — but also tends to include backwardly rustic and poor areas in a country. According to the Polish sociologist Tomasz Zarycki, it is typical for peripheries to use culture and social capital as a tool to compensate for their weakness, and to hide their dependence on the centre.²⁴ For example, Icelandic writers such as Arngrímur lærði (the Learned) and Þórður Þorláksson from the seventeenth century tried to persuade learned people in other countries that the Icelanders were of the same origin as people from the civilized Western Europe.²⁵ The Danish historian and poet C. C. Lychander (1558–1624) wrote *Den grønlandske chronica* (Greenland Chronicle) (1608) and among other books *Christian den Femtis Udvellelsis og Hyldings Historia* (The History of Christian the Fifth's Coronation Saga) (1623), where we find strong national sentiments. This sparked an interest in old literature from Iceland — Ole Worm's *Snorre Sturlessøns Norske Kongers Chronica* (Snorre Sturluson's History of Norwegian Kings) was published in Copenhagen in 1633 — so that these areas became included into the cultural sphere of the North.²⁶ Later the Norwegian Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754), a professor of history in Denmark, and Olaus Magnus before him, tried to enlighten the Republic of Letters and change its views about the people of the north, but the image of the North was not revalorized until the end of the eighteenth century.

Images of the Faroe Islands

It is difficult to study the Faroe Islands and the image of the country in literature before the year 1000, because there is not much to find. The first time the Faroe Islands were mentioned in a written source was probably in the year 825, when the learned Irish monk Dicuil from Aix-la-Chapelle wrote a story about Norwegian Vikings forcing the Irish monks off the islands, which he described as being populated by sheep and all sorts of sea-birds.²⁷ Later writers specu-

world can be peripheral. Some South American countries can be a part of a marginalized cluster of poor or underdeveloped countries, therefore they will be considered as peripheries. See Zarycki, 'An Interdisciplinary Model of Centre-Periphery Relations', p. 110.

²⁴ Zarycki, 'An Interdisciplinary Model of Centre-Periphery Relations', p. 116.

²⁵ Sumarliði R. Ísleifsson, 'Icelandic National Images', p. 151.

²⁶ Fjågesund, *The Dream of the North*, pp. 100–05.

²⁷ Debes, *Føroya søga*, 1: *Norðurlond of Føroyar*, p. 63.

lated as to whether Dicuil was referring to the Faroe Islands at all, but there seems now to be a consensus that this was the case.²⁸ In the eleventh century, the German cleric Adam of Bremen wrote about Icelanders.²⁹ The claim that he also wrote about the Faroe Islands is a common misunderstanding: in fact, he wrote about the island of Helgoland.³⁰

Little is known about the settlement of the Faroe Islands because of a lack of sources. Nevertheless, using pollen analysis, scholars have dated several settlements at around the year 650.³¹ It is generally supposed that Irish monks settled the Faroes in 725, and that they were driven away to Iceland in about 795.³² The English historian G. V. C. Young, however, claims that this could have occurred approximately seventy-five years earlier.³³

Information on Faroese culture before the Reformation is limited. A written source describing Faroese conditions in the medieval period is *Seyðabrevið* (The Sheep Letter), a legal text composed in Old Nordic and declared valid by Duke Håkon in 1298. *Seyðabrevið* is one of only a few literary sources from this epoch in Faroese history. *Fereyinga saga* (The Saga of the Faroe Islanders), which may have been written as early as 1200, exists only as fragments in other surviving manuscripts.³⁴ It is generally accepted that *Fereyinga saga* was written in Iceland, but the author had access to people from the Faroe Islands.³⁵ One other important source from this time is the fourteenth-century *Kongabókin* (The King's Book), which was in the possession of the chair of the Løgmaður in the Faroe Islands (and, in fact, even today the Løgmaður is the highest political authority of the Faroe Islands parliament). *Kongabókin* contains *Gulatingslógin* (The Gulatinglaw), *Seyðabrevið*, and other laws, including *Hundabrevið* (The Letters of the Dogs). The church brought its ecclesiastical culture to the islands,

²⁸ Debes, *Føroya søga*, 1: *Norðurlond of Føroyar*, p. 63.

²⁹ Sumarliði R. Ísleifsson, 'Barbarians of the North become the Hellenians of the North', p. 177.

³⁰ Young, *Færøerne*, pp. 61–63.

³¹ Jóhansen, 'A Paleobotanical Study'. There are, however, disputes about Jóhansen's claim which would place the settlements later. See for example, Edwards and Borthwick, 'Peaceful Wars and Scientific Invaders'.

³² It is not certain that the anchorites on the Faroe Islands were the same men who later settled in Iceland.

³³ Young, *Færøerne*, p. 10.

³⁴ An early compiled version of the saga was edited by Carl Christian Rafn as *Fereyinga Saga eller Færøboernes Historie i den islandske Grundtext med færøisk og dansk Oversættelse*.

³⁵ Foote, *Aurvandilstá*, has the most detailed analysis of this saga.

and scholars mention that the episcopal residence in Kirkjubø must have been of a high standard, since men of the stature of King Sverre of Norway were educated there.³⁶ However, this is not an established fact, and there are no sources to prove that Sverre was even in the Faroes at any point of his life.

The Faroese language diverged from Old Norse and came into existence during the late Middle Ages. In letters dating from approximately 1400, it is easy to see that an independent Faroese language was being formed, a language that was neither Norwegian nor Icelandic.³⁷ In this way, Faroese established itself as an independent language before the Reformation. It is fair to say that Faroese culture at this time was in the making.³⁸

The Faroese heraldic emblem picturing a sheep first appeared around 1400 and is still in use as the official heraldic emblem of the Faroese National Administration.³⁹ The same heraldic symbol is also found as a seal in early letters in the Faroe Islands. According to nationalism researcher Gabriella Elgenius, there is a connection between national symbols and the construction of authentication and boundaries, whereby national symbols contribute to a civic or secular religion, honouring founding myths, legends, and national heroes.⁴⁰ Therefore, the symbol was a part of the construction of an image and of relations with other countries.⁴¹

We begin to come onto more solid foundations with the early modern antiquarians, who worked at preserving and investigating records and physical remains of the Faroe Islands through corresponding and publishing in an extended network. Naturally, they saw the past partly in their own image.⁴² The Swede Olaus Magnus (1490–1557) made the first general description of the Nordic countries and their peoples and his associated map, the *Carta marina*.⁴³

³⁶ Young, *Færoerne*, p. 105.

³⁷ Debes, *Føroya søga*, II: *Skattland og len*, pp. 100–15.

³⁸ Widmark, Pedersen, and Sandøy, 'The Development of the Nordic Languages', p. 1344.

³⁹ Debes, *Føroya søga*, II: *Skattland og len*, p. 47; Adriansen, *Nationale symboler i det danske rige 1830–2000*, p. 345.

⁴⁰ Elgenius, *Symbols of Nations and Nationalism*, p. 3.

⁴¹ Elgenius, *Symbols of Nations and Nationalism*, p. 7.

⁴² Sweet, *Antiquaries*.

⁴³ The Faroe Islands appear in Richard of Holdingham's map from 1280. They can also be seen in Gerardus Mercator's (1512–94) map, in Lucas Jansz Waghenaer's (1534–1606) map of the Faroe Islands from 1592, Bagge Wandel's map from 1650, and later in Rasmus Juel's map from 1733.



Figure 14.1: The area of the Western Islands (Thule/Faroe Islands).
Detail from Olaus Magnus, *Carta marina*, Uppsala University Library. 1539.
Digital version released into public domain by Uppsala University Library.

In his 1555 *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (History of the Northern Peoples), he wrote about the dangerous rock formation in the southern part of the Faroe Islands called Munkurin (the Monk). He saw the Faroe Islands as ‘ön Färö’ (that is, as a singular island named Faroe), which together with Munkurin constituted both a safe haven for sailors and a deadly place.⁴⁴ He also mentioned the many dangerous monsters (whales and sea monsters) and demons. We do not know where Olaus Magnus got the information for his description and drawing (Figure 14.1). Fifty years later, Peder Claussøn Friis (1545–1614) composed *Norriges oc omliggende Øers sandferdige Bescriffuelse* (A True Description of Norway and the Surrounding Islands) with a rendering of the Faroe Islands based on information supplied by a Faroe Islander by the name of Jacob Oudensøn. Friis was a man of letters and was interested in ancient literature; he mentions the *Faroe Saga*, which is found in most accounts in the seventeenth century.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Olaus Magnus, *Historia om de nordiska folken*, p. 86.

⁴⁵ It was not until 1620 that authority over trade with and administration of the Faroe Islands passed from Norway to Denmark. Prior to this change, contact between the Faroe Islands and the Hanseatic League traders in Bergen in Norway had been extensive. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Faroese merchants had even established themselves in Bergen and owned houses there.

A particularly key figure for the Faroe Islands was the Danish professor Ole Worm (1588–1654). Worm was for Denmark and the North what Erasmus was for Renaissance humanism. Worm was a famous antiquarian, eventually a professor of medicine in Copenhagen. As a naturalist Worm assembled a great collection of curiosities that ranged from native artefacts collected in the New World to animals and fossils, on which he speculated greatly. Worm compiled engravings of his collection into a catalogue of his *Museum Wormianum*, published in Amsterdam in 1655. As a scientist, Worm straddled the line between premodern and modern. He had, for example, collected a (now extinct) great auk from the Faroe Islands.⁴⁶ He also shared the Norwegian humanist Absalon Beyer's interest in the culture of the Scandinavian peoples and especially their ballads and sagas.

Worm is nothing less than a key figure of science and knowledge of the North. He had expansive knowledge, and, as an expert in the ancient Nordic languages, he was able to write about both Greenland and Iceland. In 1643 he published *Monumenta danica*, a collection of pictures of runes. Worm's *Snorre Sturlessøns Heimskringla* or *Norske Kongers Chronica* (Snorre Sturluson's History of Norwegian Kings), published in Copenhagen in 1633, contains a small section on the Faroe Islands. Worm knew about preserved Faroese folk ballads, and he somehow managed to get Faroe Islanders to write down parts of them. In 1639 he had them sent to Denmark, but these manuscripts were probably lost in the great fire in Copenhagen in 1728.⁴⁷

Icelandic humanists in the last decade of the sixteenth century took pride in Old Nordic Icelandic literature. The Icelandic humanist scholars Arngrímur Jónsson (1568–1648) and later Eggert Ólafsson (1726–68) eagerly studied old literature.⁴⁸ In 1593, Jónsson published a manuscript in Latin entitled *Brevis commentarius de Islandia*, which mentioned the Faroe Islands. Jónsson wrote another important manuscript, *Crymogaea* (published in Hamburg in 1609),

⁴⁶ The species (known in Danish as the *Geirfugl* and in Latin as the *Pinguinis impennis*) became extinct in the mid-nineteenth century.

⁴⁷ Some 35,000 volumes from the University Library were lost in the fire, including the entire archives. Not only Ole Worm's papers were lost: the Icelandic professor Árni Magnússon (1633–1730) lost many books, although he managed to save his valuable collection of Icelandic manuscripts. Two other Faroe reports by Klavs Christoffersen Lyskander (1558–1624), *Descriptio Ferovie* and *Om Ferøe en kort beretning*, have also been lost. Today, both these texts are known via the Danish historian Anders Sørensen Vedel (1542–1616), who published the first volume of Danish ballads in 1591.

⁴⁸ Widmark, Pedersen, and Sandøy, 'The Nordic Languages', p. 1413.

in which he defended the image of Iceland and argued that Icelandic was an ancient language and the mother tongue of the entire Nordic region. To quote Joep Leerssen, the political implications of elevating language and texts (also the early modern interest in texts as antiquarianism) are obvious: 'philological and historical discovery of national cultures is [...] a motivating agent in teaching intellectuals to think of themselves first and foremost as members of separate national cultures, and thus an operative force the development of nationalism which deserves to be studied as such'.⁴⁹ Therefore, the discovery of medieval literary and historical roots and sources increased the sense of national culture and helped foster claims for a new form of legitimation of the modern state by appealing to the long traditions of its constituent 'nation'. The works of two scholars in particular, Lucas Debes and Thormod Torfæus, can be seen as fostering claims of the Faroese as a culture and nation.

Lucas Debes and Elevating the North

The Dane Lucas Debes (1623–1675), a former student of Worm, published a lengthy topography of the Faroe Islands in 1673 in Danish. This work was extensive, describing historical matters and the nature of the Faroes, including the countryside, sea, air, fertility of the soil, religion, and so on. Debes gave lengthy accounts of trolls, ghosts, spirits and other beings in the Faroes. This marked Debes as a man of the church, exhorting and warning people against meddling with other powers.⁵⁰ Further, he did not look kindly on the philosophies of Descartes, Galilei, Kircherius, Herbinus, and Bartholin with respect to the currents of the earth.⁵¹ The part about antiquity, *oc nogle antiquiteter*, gives homage to early modern antiquarianism.⁵² Sections were translated into

⁴⁹ See 'Study Platform on Interlocking Nationalisms', the section 'Philology and National Culture' <<http://spinnet.humanities.uva.nl/elaboration>> [accessed 30 September 2017].

⁵⁰ Rischel, 'Indledning og noter', pp. 66–67.

⁵¹ In fact, Debes was seeking to formulate his own complex theory about the currents of the earth, but his arguments did not hold. Even so, one has to admire the ambitions of a man who took on Descartes and the established ideas of his time from the periphery of the Faroe Islands. It is also remarkable that Debes was so well read, that he personally knew Bartholin, and that he kept up correspondences with English scholars of his time, including members of the Royal Society in England. Moreover, when Debes was a student in Copenhagen, he had private lessons with Worm.

⁵² In order to understand Debes's book, it is important to know that the Gabel family held the Faroe Islands in fief from 1655 until 1673. In 1662, Christoffer von Gabel (1617–1673)

Icelandic, but a print edition never came out; an English translation of the whole text followed in 1676, and eventually in 1757 a German translation appeared as well.⁵³

Debes's book is in the travel-writing genre. Between the Renaissance and the end of the eighteenth century, travel writing was affected by the idea of curiosity, a discourse that was later replaced by that of the sublime. A part of Debes's book about the Faroe Islands was about curiosity and the wonders of nature. The development of natural history was related to collections of rarities, which naturalists and travel writers alike held in high regard. The 'cult' of curiosity was especially important in the seventeenth century and became a standard in the dissemination of art and natural history. Evidence of this can be seen in prestigious museums, botanical gardens, and private collections, which affected the tenor of the seventeenth century. The most exotic objects were considered most precious, and these often came from the most remote areas. In this regard the Faroe Islands were widely renowned, especially among collectors of ballads and rare birds. The discourse of curiosity is found in both natural history and in travel writing. The search for curious new flora and fauna in natural history is echoed in travel writing's extensive use of plates featuring realistic drawings of birds, fish, and plants, but also people and their material culture. Furthermore, the prose of natural history paved the way for the sensibility in travel writing in the late eighteenth century.

Debes included a description 'Indbyggernis Qualiteter' (The Qualities of the Inhabitants of the Faroe Islands), in which he saw the Faroese as divided into two groups: 'De Onde' (the evil) and 'De Gode' (the good, or pious). According to him, Faroe Islanders were for the most part sober.⁵⁴ Debes also saw the Faroese as generous, giving travellers the best food that they have, without any pay.⁵⁵ According to Debes, Faroese food was simple and traditional because Faroe Islanders stick to old diets. Therefore, the Faroese were seen as rustic and

also acquired the rights to the monopoly trade on the Islands. His son, Frederik von Gabel (1645–1708), kept these rights up to his death. While neither father nor son ever visited the Faroes, Debes, for his part, undertook lengthy struggles against Gabel's bailiffs and considered it his duty to inform the king about the bad state of affairs on the islands. Debes published two books: the Faroe report, and a book of quotations from the Bible, which he published in order to gain the king's support.

⁵³ Debes, *Færoæ & Færoa reserata* [...] *A description and Natürliche under Politische Historie der Indeln Färøe*.

⁵⁴ Debes, *Færoæ & Færoa reserata* [...] *A description*, p. 242.

⁵⁵ Debes, *Færoæ & Færoa reserata* [...] *A description*, p. 239.

traditional people who lived like peasants and simple fishermen. Debes did not glorify the people in any way; in fact, he projected a fear of witchcraft and alcoholism. Debes mentioned Faroese traditions such as the traditional Faroese round dance and wrote down oral tales of heroes and old ballads including great parts of the *Fereyinga saga* (The Saga of the Faroe Islanders). Some of the natural history Debes collected also appeared in an article by Bartholin entitled 'Rara naturæ in insulis Ferróensibus', in which Bartholin wrote about the white Faroese bird (the great auk) and a mermaid from the island of Suðuroy.⁵⁶ Bartholin also listed thirteen rarities found in the Faroe Islands, including curious animals, diseases, and plants, which he learned from Debes.

In relation to the Republic of Letters, Debes should be viewed as a member of a community of savants dedicated to the search for religious or secular truths (or both at once) that also included Magnus, Wolf, Friis, Beyer, and not least his teacher, Worm. Debes's book can be seen as a symbol of his struggle for economic progress for the Faroe Islands and as an attempt to provide the general public in Denmark and in Europe with a better picture of the islands. However, he also wanted to be read by other members of the Republic of Letters, as shown by his many theoretical accounts.⁵⁷ In his own way, Debes also wanted to elevate the Faroese to be a part of Europe.

In my view the discourse of curiosity continued from Debes into other writings about the Faroe Islands and Iceland long after it became unfashionable. A part of this discourse is to see the Faroe Islands and Iceland as desolate, remote, or completely forgotten by man. While these areas were often portrayed as a 'terra incognita', they were mentioned throughout the history of the Republic of Letters.

Thormod Torfæus and the Non-Barbaric People of the North

While Debes had included parts of the Faroe Saga, royal historian Thormod Torfæus paraphrased *Fereyinga saga* and the lives of Sigmund and Tróndur, retelling the whole saga and adding some extra parts, in his history of the Faroe Islands published in 1695 in Latin (and in 1770 in Danish). His book is a work on the history (and memory) of the Faroe Islands.

⁵⁶ Bartholin, *Acta Medica & Philosophica Hafniensia*, p. 89. Rischel, 'Indledning og noter', p. 73. The journal was published in Copenhagen, 1673–80; founded and edited by Thomas Bartholin, it was among the first such European journals. Mainly concerned with medicine, it covered other scientific disciplines.

⁵⁷ Rischel, 'Indledning og noter', p. 62.

Torfæus, who was also known as Þormóður Torfason (1636–1719), was an Icelandic-Norwegian historian. The Danish Crown appointed him as the royal historian. Torfæus's mission in life was to write the history of Norway up until the union with Denmark. While he was working on this magnum opus, he collected all the material concerning the old dependencies of Norway and published it as a series of books written in Latin, one of which was a book on the Faroe Islands (1695).⁵⁸ Later in 1705 he added a volume called *Historia Vinlandie Antiquæ* based on *Orkneyinga saga* (Saga of the Orkney Islands) and the two Vinland sagas *Grænledinga saga* and *Eiríks saga rauða*. This literature was mostly known by specialists in the Wunderkammer and special collections and by peripheral experts such as Worm, Saxo, and Adam of Bremen. It had been popularized by the likes of Mallet (a disciple of Montesquieu). Collectors of manuscripts like Count de la Gardie and Arne Magnússon found many versions in Icelandic or Old Norse dialects. Torfæus revisited early Norwegian history and reworked the material into a coherent Latin history, in which he also included the verses from the *Poetic Edda*, and lists of Norwegian kings reaching back to Noah. The monumental four-volume *Historia rerum Norwegicarum* (1711) was an attempt to capitalize on the rich Old Norse saga literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and to create a Norwegian medieval history.⁵⁹

Torfæus's work has been somewhat overlooked by later scholars and writers. According to the historian Torggrim Titlestad, Torfæus was later criticized for lacking the scientific methods necessary to the study of history.⁶⁰ In other words, he was too old-fashioned for his time. Ludvig Holberg, a Norwegian professor in Denmark who took over the professorship in history from Árni Magnússon, criticized Torfæus for repeating source texts without interpreting them.⁶¹ Meanwhile Magnússon, a lifelong supporter of Torfæus, wrote that distinguished scholars in France and in other countries took an interest in his books.⁶² Torggrim Titlestad holds that Torfæus was a pioneer in the research of Scandinavian sagas.⁶³ Significantly, Torfæus also saw the Faroe Islanders

⁵⁸ This version is not the same as the compilation published in 1832.

⁵⁹ See Skovgaard-Petersen, 'The First Post-Medieval History of Norway in Latin', and Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Arguments against Barbarism'.

⁶⁰ See Titlestad, *Tormod Torfeus — ei innføring*, for an introduction to his works and their reception.

⁶¹ Titlestad, *Tormod Torfeus — ei innføring*, p. 15.

⁶² Titlestad, *Tormod Torfeus — ei innføring*, p. 15.

⁶³ Titlestad, *Tormod Torfeus — ei innføring*, p. 18.

in a positive light: 'at Indbyggerne paa Færøe [...] har været frie fra de norske Kongers Herredømme, og været deres egen' (the inhabitants of the Faroe Islands [...] have been free from the Norwegian hegemony and been autonomous).⁶⁴ By singling out the Faroese (and probably comparing them to the Norwegians and to his own background among the Icelanders) and referring to *Fereyinga saga*, he arrived at the notion that the Faroese had their own rules prior to the Norwegians. He wanted to elevate their status as a people.

Elevating the North in Early Modern Times

International contacts, inspirational impulses, and crosscurrents were found in early modern networks of scholars, through travel writing, topographies and cartography. The idea of the North was a powerful part of the image of others of these areas at this time, but it was also a building block of the historical self-image of these areas. The great number of Scandinavia sources on the small Faroe Islands reveals an interest in Scandinavian literature in Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, and Norway. This interest on the part of scholars had an impact on the Faroe Islands and Iceland but was motivated by a wish to give legitimacy to the region and its different states, but most of all to better the general European view of Scandinavia and the North.

Torfæus's understanding of the Faroese, Norwegian, and Icelandic past would have an effect on later scholarship such as the works of eighteenth-century Faroese poets such as Claus Lund, who used Torfæus's book and wrote historicist ballads and poems about its contents. In addition, this trope became the leading master-narrative of Faroese and Icelandic nationalism, whether or not the nationalists actually read Torfæus. It is deeply rooted in the core of nationalism to stress a long heritage, to emphasize memories of 'golden ages' but especially to look for anything that has to do with a national and ethnical self-definition. Therefore, both Debes and Torfæus stood out in their time because they did not see Norway or the Faroe Islands as worthless provinces of Denmark. Historians at that time generally sought to emphasize the fact that Scandinavia could boast long traditions of refined civilization; peoples of the North were not barbaric.⁶⁵ Such an emphasis can be seen in Olaus Magnus's work; in Johannes Magnus's history of Sweden (1554); in Johannes Pontanus's

⁶⁴ 'at Indbyggerne paa Færøe [...] har været frie fra de norske Kongers Herredømme, og været deres egen [...]'; Torfæus, *Historisk Beretning*, p. 158.

⁶⁵ This is in contrast to earlier depictions as discussed in Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*.

history of Denmark (1631); and, especially, in Torfæus's work. All of these scholars used old literature to make a case for a long and well-established Scandinavian literary heritage. There was a collaborative effort across national boundaries, mediated through the improved conditions for the dissemination of learning.⁶⁶ The scholars of the times mostly knew each other, read each other's texts, and often worked together. Further, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, leading scholars in Scandinavia were a part of the Republic of Letters, which led to increased knowledge of, and interest in, peripheral regions.

⁶⁶ Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*.

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THE *VAGINA NATIONUM* IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES: ENVISIONING THE NORTH AS A REPOSITORY OF MIGRATING BARBARIANS

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At the port of Karlshamn in southern Sweden, a monument commemorates two of Scandinavia's most famous, albeit fictional, migrants: Karl-Oskar and Kristina, the protagonists of Vilhelm Moberg's well-known novel series *Utvandrarna* (*The Emigrants*, 1949–59). As Karl-Oskar gazes stoically and unfazed towards the uncertain future in the New World, his wife turns her head and looks back to the life in rural Småland that they have left behind. Together, they appear almost Janus-faced in their outlook, an embodiment of the liminal existence of the migrant on the move that serves as a visible

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reminder of the importance ascribed to migration in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Scandinavia.

The massive population drain caused by the large-scale emigration of young Scandinavians to North America in the years around 1900 was considered a serious threat to the well-being of the Nordic nations by contemporary intellectuals.² Its cultural impact is evidenced by the flourishing genre of 'emigrant novels' written by authors such as Moberg, his Swedish compatriot Selma Lagerlöf, or his Norwegian counterparts Johan Bojer, Alfred Hauge, and O. E. Rølvaag.³ The Scandinavian countries came to be perceived as nations that exported their youth and, implicitly, their future to the New World. It is certainly no coincidence that Moberg's *Utvandrarna* novels are often regarded as the unofficial national epic of Sweden,⁴ attesting the significance of emigration as a focal point of self-perception in the North.

In this respect, the Scandinavian case is far from unusual: research on the discourses of nation-building during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has shown that memorializing migration is a very common element in the construction of national identities.⁵ The narratives of the Western Frontier in the United States, with the iconic image of intrepid pioneers on their wagon treks westwards, fulfilling the nation's Manifest Destiny, can be cited as a classical example. In the case of Boer identity in South Africa, the Voortrekkers fulfil a very similar role. Numerous modern liberation movements have drawn their inspiration from the Exodus of the ancient Israelites and adapted this narrative prototype of collective migration to their own agendas.⁶

But the shared remembrance of migration as a foundation and confirmation of social cohesion and group allegiance is by no means a prerogative of modernity.⁷ Biblical Exodus is but one of numerous examples from premodern contexts, including Virgil's *Aeneid* which provided Augustean Rome with a compelling foundation narrative, the Aztecs recounting the wandering of their ancestors from legendary Aztlán to central Mexico,⁸ and the Chinese Northern Wei dynasty (386–534) tracing its origins to an ancestral homeland in the Far North

² Hall, *Den svenskaste historien*, pp. 226–57.

³ Kongslien, 'Fiction as Interpretation of the Emigrant Experience'.

⁴ Holmgren, *Emigrant i moderniteten*, p. 18.

⁵ Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, pp. 63–64.

⁶ Langston, *Exodus through the Centuries*; Boyarin, 'Reading Exodus into History'.

⁷ Donecker, 'The Ambivalence of Migration', pp. 230–32.

⁸ Smith, 'The Aztlan Migrations of Nahuatl Chronicles'.

and commemorating the migrations of its Xianbei ancestors in historiography and inscriptions.⁹ Premodern forms of collective identity could, as these examples show, rely on the remembrance of migration, just as modern nations do.

If, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the image of the Scandinavian North was to a considerable extent shaped and dominated by the motif of emigration, it seems worth considering whether a similar verdict holds true for previous centuries as well. Such a question must, most certainly, take two crucial differences into account: the transatlantic mass migrations of the nineteenth century differed both in their scope and their form from earlier pre-industrial patterns of collective mobility, and the concept of modern nationhood provided a completely different institutional and discursive framework to migration movements that is hardly applicable to the early modern period. But even if these fundamental differences preclude the assumption of simple discursive continuities, I hope to be able to show, in the following, that migration and mobility did play an important role in the *imaginatio borealis*, the perception of Northernness, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such an inquiry, however, leads even further back in time, to the venerable motif of the *vagina nationum*, the ‘womb of nations’.

Jordanes, King Berig, and the Womb of Nations

If modern scholars were to choose *the* one single passage from the entire corpus of Greco-Latin literature that had the strongest influence on European perceptions of the North, Jordanes’s *Getica* iv. 25 would be a strong contender. Elaborating on the origin of the Goths, the sixth-century historiographer coined a memorable descriptor for their alleged homeland, the island of Scandza: ‘officina gentium aut certe velut vagina nationum’ (the workshop of tribes or the womb of nations):

Ex hac igitur Scandza insula quasi officina gentium aut certe velut vagina nationum cum rege suo nomine Berig Gothi quondam memorantur egressi: qui ut primum e navibus exientes terras attigerunt, ilico nomen loci dederunt. nam odieque illic, ut fertur, Gothiscandza vocatur.

(Now from this island of Scandza, as from a hive of races or a womb of nations, the Goths are said to have come forth long ago under their king, Berig by name. As soon

⁹ Ford, ‘The Gaxian Cave Inscription’, pp. 23, 36–38.

as they disembarked from their ships and set foot on the land, they straightway gave their name to the place. And even today it is said to be called Gothiscandza.)¹⁰

The author of this brief but enormously influential account,¹¹ Jordanes, was a Roman official and bureaucrat who, according to his own testimony, was himself of partially Gothic origin.¹² In addition to a Roman history commonly known as *Romana*, Jordanes authored a treatise entitled *De origine actibusque Getarum* (On the Origin and Deeds of the Goths), commonly abbreviated as *Getica* and completed in or shortly after 551.¹³ At that point, the Eastern Roman Empire had been embroiled in ongoing warfare with the Ostrogothic Kingdom in Italy for almost two decades, which increased the relevance of Jordanes's work for contemporary politics.

Numerous aspects of Jordanes's *Getica* have been subject to ongoing discussions among historians. In his preface, Jordanes stated that his work was essentially an epitome of a lost Gothic History, written by Cassiodorus, a Roman scholar in the service of Ostrogothic king Theoderic the Great, several decades earlier. The question whether Jordanes depended entirely on Cassiodorus or whether he pursued his own scholarly and literary agenda and merely used Cassiodorus as an authoritative source has been debated intensively.¹⁴

The historicity and veracity of the above-quoted migration of the Goths from their ancestral homeland at Scandza under the leadership of King Berig has been even more controversial. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, German scholars were willing to accept Jordanes's account at face value and postulated a Gothic *urheimat* in Scandinavia. During the last decades, such assumptions have been thoroughly refuted as historians became increasingly aware of the complexity and problems inherent to the interpretation of such sources. Tales of the origins of migrating barbarians such as Jordanes's Goths, the Langobards, or the Anglo-Saxons are a typical feature of early medieval historiography. These accounts — usually denoted by the term *origo gentium*¹⁵

¹⁰ Jordanes, *Getica*, IV.25. Translation based on Jordanes, *The Gothic History*, trans. by Microw, p. 57.

¹¹ Beck, 'Northern Antiquities', pp. 25–26; Sumarliði R. Ísleifsson, *Tver eyjar á jadrinum*, p. 38.

¹² Among the extensive literature on Jordanes, see, in particular, Christensen, *Cassiodorus, Jordanes and the History of the Goths*; Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*; Svennung, *Jordanes und Scandia*. See also Avdagic, 'The North in Antiquity' in this volume.

¹³ Jordanes considers *Getae* and *Gothi* as largely synonymous ethnonyms.

¹⁴ Cf. Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, pp. 59–71; Wolfram, *Gotische Studien*, pp. 215–24.

¹⁵ Plassmann, *Origo gentis*; Anton and others, 'Origo gentis'.

— established identity and social cohesion among the inhomogeneous and ethnically diverse *gentes* of the Migration Period.

In the case of King Berig and the putative Gothic emigration from Scandza, some scholars such as Walter Goffart or Arne Soby Christensen have denounced the *Getica* account as purely fictional. According to this interpretation, Jordanes was following a particular propagandistic agenda, either trying to provide the Goths with a prestigious origin or,¹⁶ to the contrary, stressing that these barbarians from distant lands had no place in the Roman world.¹⁷ Other historians, most notably Herwig Wolfram, have argued that such rigorous scepticism is not warranted, and that we must not rule out the possibility that the Gothic *origo gentium* might include a nucleus of oral tradition, reshaped by the authorship of Jordanes.¹⁸

The importance for these debates for a deeper understanding of the formation of barbarian identities in the early Middle Ages is beyond doubt. For the goals of this chapter, however, it seems sufficient to note that Jordanes's evocative image of the *vagina nationum* in distant Scandza, birthing the conquering Gothic *gens*, was shaped in the complex political situation of the sixth century — the transformation of the Roman world, Justinian's attempt at a reconquest of the Empire, and the confrontation between Byzantium and the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy — although an influence of older traditions cannot be ruled out entirely. And, even more importantly, we need to be aware that Jordanes was by no means alone with his idea: Paul the Deacon, the eight-century author of the *Historia Langobardorum*, located the origins of the Langobards in the Far North as well and even provided a naturalist explanation why the barren lands of the Far North were capable of bringing forth so many barbarian tribes:

Septemtrionalis plaga quanto magis ab aestu solis remota est et nivali frigore gelida, tanto salubrior corporibus hominum et propagandis est gentibus coaptata; sicut econtra omnis meridiana regio, quo solis est fervori vicinior, eo semper morbis habundat et educandis minus est apta mortalibus. Unde fit, ut tantae populorum multitudines arctoo sub axe oriantur.

(The region of the north, in proportion as it is removed from the heat of the sun and is chilled with snow and frost, is so much the more healthful to the bodies of men and fitted for the propagation of nations, just as, on the other hand, every

¹⁶ Christensen, *Cassiodorus, Jordanes and the History of the Goths*, p. 348.

¹⁷ Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, p. 70.

¹⁸ Wolfram, *Gotische Studien*, pp. 223–24. See also Pohl, 'Ethnicity, Theory, and Tradition', pp. 228–29.

southern region, the nearer it is to the heat of the sun, the more it abounds in diseases and is less fitted for the bringing up of the human race. From this it happens that such great multitudes of peoples spring up in the north.)¹⁹

The Northerners' alleged vitality and fecundity was a recurring motif in Greco-Roman literature. In the *Argonautica*, Valerius Flaccus describes the North as the most populous region in the world. No matter how many men die in the barbarians' incessant warfare, the fertile women never fail to replenish the losses and fill the land again.²⁰ Similar notions can be found in Pliny, Tacitus, Procopius, and other classics of ancient ethnography.²¹ Jordanes's image of the Northern *vagina nationum* was no individual idea but a motif well embedded in the scholarly knowledge of his time.²²

Nicolaus Ragvaldi vs Alfonso de Cartagena: Sedentary and Migratory Barbarians

In November 1434, Nicolaus Ragvaldi, bishop of Växjö in Sweden, delivered a bold patriotic speech at the Council of Basel.²³ The council fathers were most certainly quite astonished to hear that peripheral Sweden was, in fact, the most ancient, powerful, and noble kingdom in the world. But Nicolaus could back his outrageous claim with seemingly solid historical arguments. Citing the authority of Jordanes, he argued that innumerable tribes had originated from the lands in the Far North, including the Vandals, Langobards, Burgundians, Danes, Anglo-Saxons, and, most notably, the Goths who had conquered Asia and Egypt, defeated both Persians and Romans repeatedly, and ultimately sacked Rome, the capital of the world, herself. The Swedes were kinsmen of these valiant Goths, and in the form of the Swedish kingdom, the ancient Gothic realm still prevailed and flourished, as powerful as ever.²⁴

¹⁹ Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, I. 1. Translation based on Paul the Deacon, *History of the Langobards*, trans. by Foulke, p. 1.

²⁰ Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica*, VI.33–41. See Weibull, *Die Auswanderung der Goten aus Schweden*, p. 17.

²¹ Weibull, *Die Auswanderung der Goten aus Schweden*, pp. 17–18.

²² Rix, *The Barbarian North*, pp. 28–49.

²³ Weibull, *Die Auswanderung der Goten aus Schweden*, pp. 3–4, 24–25. See also Schmidt-Voges, *De antiqua claritate*, pp. 43–45, with an overview of more recent literature.

²⁴ Ebendorffer, *Chronicon Austriae*, ed. by Pez, cols 690–92. Thomas Ebendorffer attended

The reason for Nicolaus Ragvaldi's grandiose assertion of Sweden's glorious Gothic heritage seems trivial at first: he was dissatisfied with his place in the seating order and tried to ensure a better treatment for his delegation by stressing Sweden's importance. Yet the seating order at the Council was by no means an insignificant issue but rather a symbolic representation of the delegates' influence. It is therefore hardly surprising that Nicolaus's claim for pre-eminence roused objections, most notably from Alfonso de Cartagena, the Castilian representative.²⁵ He acknowledged that both Castile and Sweden could claim Gothic ancestry, since the Goths who settled Spain had come from the Far North. But then, Alfonso challenged Nicolaus with a rhetorical question: whose ancestors deserved greater praise — the Swedish Goths, who remained meekly in their inhospitable homeland, or the Spanish Goths, who dared to emigrate and bravely conquered foreign lands?²⁶

With this rebuttal to Nicolaus Ragvaldi's claims, Alfonso de Cartagena set the stage for future discussions of Jordanes and the *vagina nationum* trope. Throughout the following centuries, scholarly accounts of the ancient Germanic tribes evolved around the basic opposition of mobility versus territoriality: could a realm claim to partake in the glory of ancestors that had, in fact, left their homeland and settled somewhere completely different — as Nicolaus had argued to Alfonso's chagrin? And, even more importantly: who was the paragon of Germanic virtues²⁷ — the steadfast defender of his native land or the migrating conqueror? Both contradictory stereotypes proved to be enormously influential in early modern historiography, and both were well suited for scholarly identity construction. While adherents of the first topos bolstered their opinion with the authority of Tacitus, Jordanes and his *vagina nationum* catchphrase became the major reference for scholars who preferred their barbarians northerly and mobile.

the Council as representative of the University of Vienna and witnessed Nicolaus Ragvaldi's speech. He reproduced the oration in the introduction to his *Chronicon Austriae* (1463/64).

²⁵ Weibull, *Die Auswanderung der Goten aus Schweden*, pp. 4–5, 20.

²⁶ Alfonsus a Carthagenā, 'Regum hispanorum [...] anacephalæsis', p. 620.

²⁷ The vast majority of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century scholars were willing to accept that there was an unbroken genealogical continuity between the Germanic tribes of antiquity — including the Goths — and contemporary Germans. On this extremely problematic assumption, which shapes popular images of the 'Germanic past' up to the present day, see Beck and others, *Zur Geschichte der Gleichung 'germanisch-deutsch'*.

The Tacitean Paradigm: Germani sunt indigenae

The rediscovery of Tacitus's *Germania* in the 1450s and the subsequent *editio princeps* in 1472²⁸ resulted in a significant reassessment of barbarian mobility.²⁹ In the second chapter of his short but disproportionately significant treatise,³⁰ Tacitus had remarked that the Germans were presumably *indigenae*, indigenous inhabitants of their lands and had never been conquered nor intermingled with other people.³¹ Like most passages in the *Germania*, this brief and cautiously phrased statement was enthusiastically received by German humanists. Earlier medieval genealogies had tended to trace the original settlers of a province, the ancestors of a dynasty or the founders of a city to distant, prestigious lands, with ancient Troy being particularly popular.³² With Tacitus's dictum on the Germans' alleged autochthony in mind, these migration narratives were discarded or at least de-emphasized by humanist scholars.³³

In the course of this 'Tacitean paradigm shift' in the decades around 1500,³⁴ priorities were reversed. The ancient Germans were no longer depicted as *adventi* (immigrants), but rather as *indigenae* (indigenes). The ideal of *stabilitas loci* replaced the topoi of barbarian mobility, and static and uncompromising territoriality came to be seen as a crucial element of Germanic virtues.³⁵ In a 1501 oration with the programmatic title *Germani sunt indigenae*, Heinrich Bebel, professor at the University of Tübingen, proudly stated that 'Soli Germani [...]

²⁸ Mertens, 'Die Instrumentalisierung der "Germania"', pp. 58–61.

²⁹ Helmrath, 'Probleme und Formen nationaler und regionaler Historiographie', pp. 381–84; Mertens, 'Die Instrumentalisierung der "Germania"', pp. 80–84; Münkler, Grünberger and Mayer, *Nationenbildung*, pp. 236–42; Riess, 'Motive des patriotischen Stolzes bei den deutschen Humanisten', pp. 14–15; Tiedemann, 'Tacitus und das Nationalbewußtsein der deutschen Humanisten', pp. 40–47.

³⁰ For a recent overview of the *Germania*'s wide-ranging influence, see Krebs, *A Most Dangerous Book*.

³¹ Tacitus, *Germania*, 2: 'Ipsos Germanos indigenas crediderim minimeque aliarum gentium adventibus et hospitibus mixtos' (The Germans themselves I should regard as aboriginal, and not mixed at all with other races through immigration or intercourse).

³² Rix, *The Barbarian North*, pp. 15–19.

³³ Tiedemann, 'Tacitus und das Nationalbewußtsein der deutschen Humanisten', pp. 44–46.

³⁴ Mertens, 'Spätmittelalterliches Landesbewußtsein', p. 143.

³⁵ Helmrath, 'Probleme und Formen nationaler und regionaler Historiographie', p. 382; Mertens, 'Spätmittelalterliches Landesbewußtsein', p. 143; Donecker, 'The Ambivalence of Migration', pp. 229–30.

a nullis nationibus pulsi patria, nullis cedentes' (Only the Germans have never been driven from their homeland by any other nation, and they yield to no one).³⁶ Probably the most drastic expression of this attitude can be found in the *Germaniae chronicon* of Sebastian Franck (1538), a man of letters known for his forceful language:

Weitter haben diß die Teutschen vor vil andern völcckern beuor/ das wir nit ein frembd herkommen volck/ als ein vnflat auß andern lendern außgetriben herkommen/ sonder vonn Tuiscone Noe sun in dem land darinn wir seind/ gefallen/ zeugt vnnd porn/ also das der Teutschen landt auch der Teutschen vrsprung ist.

(The Germans are superior to many other nations, because we are not a nation that has come from distant lands, and poured like filth from foreign countries. By Tuisco, the son of Noah, we have been sired, and born in the same land where we are now. Thus, the land of the Germans is also the origin of the Germans.)³⁷

Early sixteenth-century humanists were certainly aware of ancient sources that documented the invasions and migrations of barbarian tribes which were to be considered 'Germanic' in early modern terminology.³⁸ These migrations were regularly mentioned in historical accounts and could be perceived as part of a common German heritage; for example, in a famous 1531 letter by the Alsatian humanist Beatus Rhenanus, who claimed the 'triumphs of the Goths, Vandals and Franks' for 'us', that is, for his German countrymen.³⁹ But as scholarly dis-

³⁶ Bebel, *Oratio ad regem Maximilianum*, fol. D2^v.

³⁷ Franck, *Germaniae chronicon*, Preface. The reference to 'Tuisco', the son of Noah, might seem confusing at first glance, since no character of this name is mentioned in the Bible. Like many of his contemporaries, Franck relied on a highly influential fifteenth-century forgery, the [*Pseudo-*]Berosus of Annius of Viterbo. Annius had provided a 'missing link' between Tacitus's *Germania* and the Bible by claiming that Tuisto, mentioned by Tacitus as the divine ancestor of the Germanic peoples, had in fact been a post-diluvial son of Noah. Though the veracity of Annius's 'discovery' was disputed by numerous humanists, many others could not resist the opportunity to bring the esteemed Tacitean account into accordance with Scripture. For Annius and his importance for German humanism, see Mertens, 'Die Instrumentalisierung der "Germania"', pp. 84–91.

³⁸ Riess, 'Motive des patriotisches Stolzes bei den deutschen Humanisten', pp. 15–16, 28–30; Bieder, *Geschichte der Germanenforschung*, p. 39.

³⁹ Rhenanus, *Briefwechsel*, ed. by Horawitz and Hartfelder, p. 402: 'Nostri enim sunt Gothorum, Vandalorum Francorumque triumpho. Nobis gloriae sunt illorum imperia.' At first glance, this quote seems like an outburst of rather unreflected patriotic enthusiasm. But shortly afterwards, Beatus Rhenanus acknowledges the negative consequences of the barbarian invasions and deplores the destruction caused by his ancestors.



Figure 15.1:
Genealogical tree. From Franciscus
Irenicus, *Germaniae exegesis*,
Haguenau, 1518. Image released
into public domain.

course was thoroughly dominated by the authority of Tacitus and the ubiquitous motif of Germanic autochthony, Germanic migrations were regarded as marginal phenomena at the best or as aberrant behaviour at the worst.⁴⁰

In this intellectual climate, dominated by the Tacitean postulate of Germanic autochthony, the idea of a Gothic migration from the Far North did not seem particularly appealing. The first printed edition of the *Getica* was published in Augsburg in 1515, edited by the eminent humanist Konrad Peutinger and printed together with the Langobard history of Paul the Deacon.⁴¹ But Jordanes's account had a rather limited impact during the first half of the sixteenth century. The aforementioned Heinrich Bebel,⁴² for example, became

⁴⁰ Helmuth, 'Probleme und Formen nationaler und regionaler Historiographie', p. 383.

⁴¹ Bieder, *Geschichte der Germanenforschung*, p. 33.

⁴² Bebel, *Oratio ad regem Maximilianum*, fol. B2^r. See also Bieder, *Geschichte der Germanenforschung*, p. 32.

aware of the Goths' alleged Scandinavian origin even before the 1515 *editio princeps*,⁴³ but he did not seem particularly impressed by the theory and mentioned it merely in passing.⁴⁴

The most notable allusion to the northern *vagina gentium* during the early decades of the sixteenth century can be found in Franciscus Irenicus's *Germaniae exegesis* (1518). Irenicus was the first scholar who attempted to visualize Jordanes's dictum of the ever-fertile womb of nations, by providing a genealogical tree of numerous *gentes* that had originated 'E Scandia insula septentrionali' (from the septentrional island of Scandia) (Figure 15.1).⁴⁵ It is an impressive line-up of barbarian tribes, ranging from the obligatory Goths and Langobards to more exotic entries such as the Huns, the Avars and the Bulgarians. But Irenicus was apparently not entirely convinced that Jordanes's model was the most appropriate explanation of Germanic origins. Several passages later, he proposed an alternative genealogy that remained faithful to the Tacitean paradigm and depicted the Germanic ancestors as place-bound and sedentary.⁴⁶ Irenicus did, as it seems, consider Scandza as a possible *urheimat* of the Germans, but he was reluctant to depart from the Tacitean dictum of autochthony, which left him with two somewhat contradictory genealogies.⁴⁷

⁴³ Unlike Tacitus's *Germania*, Jordanes's *Getica* was continuously used by historiographers throughout the Middle Ages (as the example of Nicolaus Ragvaldi had shown) and was quite well known among scholars even before printed editions became available. See Weibull, *Die Auswanderung der Goten aus Schweden*, pp. 5–6, for other examples.

⁴⁴ Other early sixteenth-century humanists who reference Scandza and the *vagina nationum* include Krantz, Althamer, and Beatus Rhenanus. See Bieder, *Geschichte der Germanenforschung*, pp. 48, 51, 71.

⁴⁵ Irenicus, *Germaniae exegesis*, fol. 21^r.

⁴⁶ Irenicus, *Germaniae exegesis*, fol. 57^r. In this second proposal, Irenicus links the Germanic kings to Noah and his alleged son, 'Tuiscon'. Inspired by Annii's *Berosus* (see n. 36 above), such a genealogy was often preferred by humanists who wanted to stress the indigenous nature of the Germans. In a Christian interpretation of history, the idea of an 'indigenous inhabitant' was, strictly speaking, meaningless, since all humans originated from Noah and his family. Being a pagan, Tacitus could not possibly have known that even the Germans' ancestors had, at one point, migrated from the stranded Ark at Ararat. Incorporating Tacitus's Tuisto into the family of Noah — thereby linking Latin and biblical traditions — served as a ploy to reconcile Tacitus with Christian models of history: Noah's son Tuisto had settled in Germany, and afterwards his descendants have retained this territory that had been distributed to them in the primordial settlement of the world — so they were 'as indigenous as possible' in a Christian worldview.

⁴⁷ Bieder, *Geschichte der Germanenforschung*, p. 37.

Wolfgang Lazius and the Introduction of migratio gentium

In 1557, the Habsburg court historiographer Wolfgang Lazius published a copious scholarly tract, entitled *De gentium aliquot migrationibus* (On the Migrations of Certain Tribes). The treatise was intended to serve as a preparatory study for a comprehensive account of Austrian history, modelled after Livy's *Decades* of Roman history, but Lazius never managed to finish it. As a first stage in this grand project, *De gentium aliquot migrationibus* tackled the fundamental prerequisite for any history of Austria: the origin of the country and its inhabitants. The *Austriadum gens* (the people of Austria) was, according to Lazius, the result of the intermingling (*commixtio*) of numerous barbarian *gentes*, including the Celts, Galatians, Suebi, Marcomanni, Vandals, Goths, Heruls, Burgundians, Langobards, and various others.⁴⁸ He therefore undertook the endeavour to delineate the history of each of these barbarian tribes, their customs, political institutions, rulers, and other ethnographical details he could gather from his sources.

In this broad panorama of barbarian ethnicity, Lazius emphasized the *migrationes et sedes* (the migrations and changing settlements) of each tribe.⁴⁹ This marked a decisive departure from the Tacitean notion of autochthony and the preference for sedentary, static Germanic ancestors that the previous generation of humanists had displayed. Lazius has often been credited with the 'invention' of *Völkerwanderung*, the 'Great Migration', as a historiographical concept. Such a conclusion certainly goes too far, since Lazius never understood *migratio gentium* as the designation of a particular historical period or as a chain of events, as the later term *Völkerwanderung* implied.⁵⁰ But he did manage to re-introduce the notion of barbarian mobility into the scholarly discourse that had been marginalized during the preceding decades under the influence of the rediscovered *Germania*.

The impact of Lazius's treatise is documented by a number of smaller writings and academic orations that were written during the following years and stress barbarian mobility in a similar vein. Heinrich Moller delivered the speech 'On the Origin, Changes and Migrations of the Tribes that Inhabited Germany' at

⁴⁸ Lazius, *De gentium aliquot migrationibus*, p. 4. See also Geary 'Völkerwanderung as Cross-Cultural Interaction', pp. 45–46.

⁴⁹ Bieder, *Geschichte der Germanenforschung*, pp. 59–60.

⁵⁰ Springer, 'Völkerwanderung', p. 510.

the University of Wittenberg in 1563,⁵¹ which indicates that denominational differences did not prevent the Catholic Wolfgang Lazius from being read at the intellectual centre of Lutheranism. A similar oration, also in Wittenberg, followed three years later, presented by Johannes Bugenhagen the Younger, the son of the prominent reformer of the same name.⁵² In 1564, the Egenolff printshop in Frankfurt am Main published a booklet entitled *De migrationibus populorum septentrionalium* (On the Migrations of Northern Nations).⁵³ The title page failed to mention that this work was merely a translation of the first chapter of Machiavelli's posthumously published *Istorie fiorentine* (1532) — which, in turn, had been strongly influenced by Paul the Deacon and his account of Langobard origins.⁵⁴ It seems that the printers at Egenolff & Heirs were well aware that Lazius had sparked quite some interest in the topic of barbarian migration among scholars and tried to cater to this demand with a quick publication that seemed novel, at least at first glance.

This new appreciation of barbarian mobility that began to emerge in the second half of the sixteenth century, in the wake of Lazius's monumental tract on *migrationes gentium*, might have led to a rediscovery of Scandza, King Berig, and the *vagina nationum*. But such a reassessment of Jordanes was slow in the making, at least among scholars in the Holy Roman Empire. Lazius himself was aware of Scandza as the putative homeland of the Goths,⁵⁵ but he mentioned it only in passing, preferring to locate the origin of all Germanic tribes further to the East, in Asia.⁵⁶ Möller was far more outspoken in his 1563 oration and dismissed the theory altogether, mocking the scholars who believe that all those numerous barbarian tribes have emerged from Scandinavia like the Greek warriors from the Trojan Horse.⁵⁷ Far more decisive was the disap-

⁵¹ Mollerus, *Oratio de origine mutationibus et migrationibus gentium que Germaniam tenuerunt*.

⁵² Bugenhagen, *Oratio de gentibus quae dilacerarunt Imperium Romanum in Occidente*. The oration was also published under the title *Fragmentum de migrationibus et mutationibus gentium*. Bieder, *Geschichte der Germanenforschung*, p. 63, claims that these are two different texts, one written by Bugenhagen the Younger and one by his prominent father, but this is not the case.

⁵³ Turler, *De migrationibus populorum septentrionalium*.

⁵⁴ Beck, 'Northern Antiquities', p. 34.

⁵⁵ Lazius, *De gentium aliquot migrationibus*, pp. 718–21.

⁵⁶ Cf. Bieder, *Geschichte der Germanenforschung*, p. 59.

⁵⁷ Mollerus, *Oratio de origine mutationibus et migrationibus gentium que Germaniam tenuerunt*, fol. A8^v.

proval of Philipp Clüver,⁵⁸ author of the 1616 *Germania antiqua* and widely regarded as the most eminent expert on the Germanic past among seventeenth-century German scholars. Clüver wrote, 'Verum commune hoc esse video omnibus istius sæculi scriptoribus, genteis sibi ignotas, ab ultimo usque septentrione deducere, mirificasque circummigrationes earum effingere fabulas: quarum Diaconi de Langobardis, & Iornandis de Gothis libri sunt pleni' (I notice that all writers of this era have the urge to deduce unknown tribes from the uttermost North, and to devise the most wondrous tales about their migrations, such as the ones contained in the books by Diaconus, on the Langobards, or Jordanes, on the Goths).⁵⁹

Swedish Gothicism: The Triumph of King Berig

While Jordanes and the *vagina nationum* remained either marginalized or ridiculed among German scholars, the image of the inexhaustible 'womb of nations', continuously spawning new barbarian tribes, had a resonating success in Scandinavia, particularly in Sweden. In the mid-sixteenth century, the notion of a genealogical connection between ancient Goths and contemporary Swedes developed from medieval roots into a sophisticated and highly influential mode of thought, commonly subsumed under the term 'Gothicism'.⁶⁰ In 1554, *Gothorum Sueonumque historia* (History of the Swedes and Goths) was published in Rome.⁶¹ The author, the learned Swedish clergyman and exiled Catholic archbishop of Uppsala Johannes Magnus, expanded Jordanes's short Scandza account into a grandiose vision of Swedish origins. Like Nicolaus Ragvaldi before him, Magnus claimed that the Swedes were descendants of the Goths. Most eminent among all the ancient Gothic rulers was King Berig, who, more than eight hundred years after the deluge, led his warriors out of their ancestral abode, Scandinavia, and embarked on the first Gothic campaign of conquest.⁶² From that time onwards, Gothic history, according to Johannes

⁵⁸ Bieder, *Geschichte der Germanenforschung*, p. 79.

⁵⁹ Clüver, *Germania antiqua*, bk II, p. 102.

⁶⁰ On Swedish Gothicism, see, in particular, Schmidt-Voges, *De antiqua claritate*; Walette, *Sagans svenskar*, pp. 55–61; Neville, 'Gothicism and Early Modern Historical Ethnography'; Svennung, *Zur Geschichte des Goticismus*.

⁶¹ Schmidt-Voges, *De antiqua claritate*, pp. 95–113; Weibull, *Die Auswanderung der Goten aus Schweden*, pp. 25–26.

⁶² Iohannes Magnus, *Gothorum Sueonumque historia*, pp. 37–40.

Magnus, has been a glorious tale of continuous migration and conquest. *Gothi externi* (those that migrated) and *Goth interni* (their stationary kinsmen who had remained in Sweden) became the two dominating conceptual categories in his highly influential vision of history. And although the *Gothi interni* had their fair share of notable and glorious kings, it was primarily the roving *Gothi externi* whose prowess and fame confirmed the reputation of the young Swedish monarchy in Johannes Magnus's account.

However, such ideas were not unequivocally accepted. An early, very harsh criticism of Gothicism was voiced by Olaus Petri,⁶³ the key figure of the Lutheran reformation in Sweden, in *En swensk cröneka* (A Swedish Chronicle, c. 1540):

Woro Swenska Cröneker, läggia Swenska män ena stora äro til, ther aff, at the Göthar, som epter theres mening här wthgongne äre, haffua så mykit bedriffuit i främande land, Men när wij sakena rätt besinna wilie, är ther med fögho ära inlagd, Man lägger jw fögho äro ther in ther med, at man faar med öffuerwold och orätt, i annars land som oss intit ondt giordt haffua, skinnar och brenner, dräper och förheriar, them som gerna wille sittia med fridh, Thet wore oss mykit större ära at woro förfädher had altijdh warit fridhsame och sachtmodughe, sittit stilla, warit till fridz med that gudh them giffuit hade, och icke röffuat och skinnat andra.⁶⁴

(Our Swedish chronicles consider it a great honour for Swedish men that the Goths, who are believed to have migrated from these lands, performed such great and many deeds in foreign lands. But, if we bethink justly, therein lies but little and doubtful honour. One achieves little honour if one invades another country, which has done us no harm, with force and injustice, if one rapes and burns, kills and pillages those who only wished to live in peace. It would do us greater honour if our forefathers had always been peaceful and meek, if they had been content with all the things God had given them, instead of robbing and raping others.)

Interestingly enough it was the historical vision of the Catholic dissident Johannes Magnus which won the approval of the Protestant Swedish court, while the objections of the merited Lutheran reformer Olaus Petri remained unheeded. Johannes Magnus' hypotheses were recognized as a viable tool to enhance the prestige of the Swedish kingdom, and Gothicism developed into an elaborate historical doctrine that dominated both Swedish self-perception and the country's image abroad during *Stormaktstiden*, the era of Swedish great power ambitions in the seventeenth century. Numerous historiographers

⁶³ Schmidt-Voges, *De antiqua claritate*, pp. 114–29; Walette, *Sagans svenskar*, p. 56.

⁶⁴ Olavus Petri, 'En Swensk Cröneka', ed. by Hesselman, pp. 9–10.

followed Johannes Magnus's example and explored the country's Gothic origins, and Jordanes was greatly appreciated as *the* informant for Sweden's glorious past.⁶⁵ At a tourney on the occasion of his coronation in 1617, Gustavus Adolphus himself impersonated King Berig, who admonished the Swedish nobility to prove themselves worthy of their Gothic forefathers.⁶⁶

Genealogical speculations in the wake of Gothicism reached a final peak in the writings of Olaus Rudbeck, in particular his monumental *Atlantica* (1679–1702).⁶⁷ The Uppsala polymath surpassed the traditional doctrine of Gothicism in his methodological versatility but also in the sheer scope of his visions. According to Rudbeck's famous hypothesis, the legendary island of Atlantis as well as the realm of the Hyperboreans had been situated in Sweden, which could therefore claim to be the cradle of European civilization. The fact that the Goths also originated from Sweden seems almost insignificant in comparison. Rudbeck never questioned the basic tenet of Gothicism, but Berig and his conquering Goths paled in importance when compared to the wonders of Atlantis. But although *Atlantica* departed from Jordanes's narrative — to which Johannes Magnus and the previous Gothicists had adhered very closely — the notion of the *vagina nationum* remained unchanged in Rudbeck's *magnum opus*.

Rudbeck had initially been trained as a physician, and his interest in physiology and medicine becomes often evident in his historical writings as well. He claimed that Swedes live longer and have stronger and healthier bodies than their counterparts in southern lands. While women in the South of Europe may have four, five, or six children, the women of the North regularly give birth to fourteen children in their lifetime, and sometimes as many as twenty-four or even thirty-four.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, Rudbeck had to observe that

⁶⁵ Jordanes's image of Scandza as an inexhaustible reservoir of conquering barbarians implied that the Goths were not the only successful exports from Scandinavia. On the 1539 *Carta marina*, the first detailed map of the North, Johannes Magnus's brother Olaus provided a genealogical tree of thirty-four nations that originated from Scandinavia. The depiction, clearly inspired by Francisus Irenicus's Scandza genealogy in the *Germaniae exegesis*, includes not only the inevitable Goths, Ostrogoths, and Vestrogoths, but also the Vandals, Heruls and Avars, the Huns and Bulgarians, and even the Amazons. Jordanes is repeatedly mentioned as the key reference.

⁶⁶ Schmidt-Voges, *De antiqua claritate*, pp. 206–07.

⁶⁷ King, *Finding Atlantis*; Eriksson, *Rudbeck 1630–1702*; Walette, *Sagans svenskar*, pp. 59–61.

⁶⁸ Beck, 'Northern Antiquities', pp. 34–35; DuBois, 'Taking Place'.

human beings tend to diminish in size and vigour as soon as they leave Sweden. These arguments, and numerous other similarly outrageous claims, amount to a naturalist explanation for Jordanes's venerable account. Even though the Goths themselves fade into the background, Rudbeck's *Atlantica* presents an emphatic image of the *vagina nationum*, probably the strongest assertion of the topic ever produced by an early modern scholar. Sweden might be Atlantis and Hyperborea, according to Rudbeck's rampant imagination, but most notably it is the womb of nations, the land from which virile and vigorous populations had to emerge to restore the ever-declining populaces of Southern Europe.⁶⁹

Epilogue: Echoes of Jordanes in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Unlike Karl-Oskar and Kristina at the port of Karlshamn, there is no monument — to my knowledge — that commemorates King Berig and his Goths, and their emigration from Scandinavia. But Jordanes's evocative image of the 'womb of nations' and its gradual rediscovery in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did have a lasting impact on the perception of the North and its inhabitants. Throughout the Middle Ages and most of the early modern period, the North had been mainly associated with barbarism and savagery — marginalized and devoid of any historical agency, apart from a certain destructive potential.⁷⁰

Rudbeck's *Atlantica* was the final and most stupendous achievement of Gothicist historiography. When the visionary polymath died in 1702, leaving his *magnum opus* unfinished, the Great Northern War (1700–1721) was already raging. At the war's end, the Swedish Empire was in ruins, and Gothicism, as the legitimizing narrative behind Sweden's imperial ambitions, had become redundant. Swedish scholars continued to research the country's Gothic history, but the verve and zeal of seventeenth-century Gothicism was a thing of the past.

The Age of Enlightenment disregarded and even ridiculed Rudbeck's fanciful claims and his unbridled patriotism, but the basic, underlying assumption — the motif of the 'womb of nations' — prevailed. Jordanes's account, popularized by Swedish scholars, was increasingly adopted and accepted by scholars all over Europe. Like many contemporaries, Montesquieu struggled with the discrepancy between the supposedly teeming population of ancient Scandinavia

⁶⁹ DuBois, 'Taking Place'.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden*.

and the sparsely populated lands in the North that he knew.⁷¹ But he was willing to accept the fundamental idea: combining Tacitus's ideal of the freedom-loving Germanic tribes with Jordanes's *officina gentium aut vagina nationum*,⁷² Montesquieu envisioned Scandinavia as 'la source de la liberté de l'Europe' (the workshop of liberty), as he famously stated in *De l'esprit des lois*.⁷³ This assumption of the North being a resource of liberty developed into the philosophical leitmotif in the eighteenth-century imagination of Northernness.⁷⁴

But the Jordanes reception in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries also paved the way for less pleasant visions of the North. The nineteenth century popularized the idea of *ex septentrione lux*, the light of civilization and culture emerging from and originating in the North. It is a thoroughly Rudbeckian image, but it is innocuous only at first glance. German nationalists propagated *ex septentrione lux* to challenge the traditional Christian image of *ex oriente lux*, as an affirmation of a supposed superiority of the Germanic 'race' with blatant anti-Semitic connotations.⁷⁵ The various figments of an Aryan *urheimat* in the Far North that proliferated during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries mark the intellectual nadir of centuries of Jordanes-inspired scholarship.

It is indeed ironic that Jordanes's tale — the North as the inexhaustible repository of barbarians — was at the root of a paradigm shift that ultimately enabled the North to shed its barbarian associations. But the *vagina nationum* motif does, in essence, imply an empowerment of the North. As a first step, the Goths and the other migrating tribes were re-evaluated and increasingly depicted in a positive light. Once the underlying assumption — the overwhelming vitality of the North, its potential for change and innovation — had taken root among European scholars, the North had become available for other conceptions and propositions as well. As the North was re-envisioned as the source of liberty during the eighteenth century, the old stereotypes of backwardness and barbarism were transferred to the East, which was increasingly conceived as the antithesis to the supposedly enlightened West.⁷⁶ Even though nineteenth- and twentieth-century nationalism and racism demonstrated how to abuse the idea of Northern agency, the fundamental changes of perspec-

⁷¹ Beck, 'Northern Antiquities', pp. 20–21.

⁷² Sumarliði R. Ísleifsson, *Tver eyjar á jadrinum*, pp. 38–39.

⁷³ Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, pp. 271–72.

⁷⁴ See, *Deutsche Germanen-Ideologie*, pp. 28–29; Beck, 'Northern Antiquities', pp. 63–74.

⁷⁵ Wiwjorra, 'Ex oriente lux — Ex septentrione lux'.

⁷⁶ Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*.

tive could not be undone. Once it had become empowered, the periphery was no longer insignificant and ceased to be a periphery. The consequences of this empowerment of the North can still be felt in present-day discourses of identity-building, self-perception, and external perception in Scandinavia. Perhaps venerable King Berig does deserve a monument, after all — although (or even because) he is just a figment of Jordanes's historical imagination.

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THE ‘NORTHERN ATLANTIS’ REVISITED: INVENTING THE ARCTIC ROOTS OF CIVILIZATION IN LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PARIS

Päivi Maria Pihlaja

In 1775, French astronomer Jean Sylvain Bailly (1736–1803) proposed a new interpretation of the origins and early stages of astronomical knowledge. Published in Paris, his treatise, *Histoire de l'Astronomie Ancienne*, together with a number of later ones in which Bailly defended his ideas, initiated a lively polemic involving many renowned authors, among them Voltaire. The controversy revolved around Bailly's suggestion that the first advances in astronomy and of human civilization in general had been taken by people who once inhabited the northernmost regions of the globe, specifically Spitsbergen, a desolate archipelago in the middle of the Arctic Ocean.¹

Understandably, the theory was mind-boggling. One could have hardly imagined a more peripheral location for a civilization. However, it was not without precedents. Early paragons of utopian ideals situated in northern spaces can be traced back to antiquity.² Bailly's idea also seems to echo Jordanes's famous statement about the North as a womb of nations.³ The novelty was, rather, in how these mental maps were now being constructed through the history of science.⁴

¹ Bailly, *Histoire de l'Astronomie Ancienne*; Bailly, *Lettres sur l'origine des sciences*; Bailly, *Lettres sur l'Atlantide*. In the following, I will principally refer to second editions where Bailly continued to develop his arguments.

² See the chapters by Sandin and Webb in this volume.

³ See Donecker's chapter in this volume for a discussion of the womb of nations trope.

⁴ Buffon, *Époques de la Nature*, p. 207.

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In the early modern era when sciences were in fashion and an important source for prestige, the history of science was used to create patriotic images of glorious pasts. Such apologetic tendencies reached a vertex in a four-volume treatise *Atlantica* (1677–1704) by Swedish polymath Olaus Rudbeck the elder (1677–1702) who placed the northern regions at the central stage of history, in support of Swedish claims as a great power.⁵

Rudbeck's attempts to demonstrate that almost all important discoveries and innovations of antiquity (astronomy included) had a northern origin were received disapprovingly by foreign readers.⁶ By the middle of the eighteenth century, Swedish scholars had already distanced themselves from these patriotic excesses, which were interpreted by astronomer Anders Celsius in the 1730s as an attempt by 'gamla Rudbecken [...] narra både in- och utlänningar' (old Rudbeck [...] to trick both foreigners and countrymen).⁷ Yet, suddenly in 1775, the Frenchman Bailly proposed a similar interpretation. Not only did he use similar arguments but admitted readily his indebtedness to Rudbeck, even naming him as his 'precursur'.⁸ Why were these ideas now suddenly adopted and advocated by a renowned astronomer in Paris?

Despite the wide exposure that Bailly's writings had in their own time, they have not been explored as a source of the historical image of the northern regions by modern scholarship. The aim of this chapter is, therefore, to give an overview of Bailly's theory of the 'lost Atlantis' of the North and to show that despite its rather extravagant nature, it should not simply be disregarded as a curiosity. His thoughts reflect wider changes that occurred during the latter part of the eighteenth century in European imagery concerning the North and its potential in terms of science and civilization. This chapter addresses the call for wider 'geographies of the Enlightenment' by analysing how new visions of the North were rooted in a more dynamic interpretation of the history of the globe itself.⁹ The discussion will cover Bailly's contemporary, the famous French naturalist Georges Leclerc de Buffon (1707–88), to show how these

⁵ Rudbeck, *Olf Rudbecks Atlands eller Manheim*, ed. by Nelson.

⁶ Eriksson, *Rudbeck 1630–1702*, pp. 343–47.

⁷ Linköping, Linköpings Stiftsbibliotek, Erik Benzeliuss den yngres Brevväxling, band 16, no. 177, Letter from Anders Celsius to Erik Benzeliuss, 24 December 1741.

⁸ Bailly, *Lettres sur l'Atlantide*, p. 305. Other references to Rudbeck, e.g.; Bailly *Lettres sur l'Atlantide*, pp. 295, 303, 307, 343, 351–69, 398, 419; Bailly, *Lettres sur l'origine des sciences*, p. 97; Bailly, *Histoire de l'astronomie ancienne*, pp. 36, 98, 99, 286, 308, 323–27.

⁹ For example, Withers and Livingstone, 'Introduction: On Geography and Enlightenment'.

new circumstances allowed, or even incited, scholars to adopt a new outlook and locate the crucial phases of the history of the mankind in distinctly remote northern spaces.

Astronomy and Myth in Northern Spaces

Jean Sylvain Bailly held a central position in the Parisian circles of learning. For generations, his ancestors had held the office of the keeper of paintings of the king of France. He, however, had followed his inclination towards sciences and gained a name as an astronomer, especially due to his studies of the moons of Jupiter. Bailly had been invited to the Académie des Sciences in 1763 and, among other honourable academy memberships, he was elected to the Académie Française. Being an eloquent writer, Bailly also harboured literary ambitions. His history of astronomy, written in the 1770s, announced for contemporaries that his scholarly ambitions were, increasingly, in the field of literature and history.¹⁰

Bailly's thoughts were not simply an echo of Baroque history writing, nor were they merely an instance of an individual scholar's fancy. They reflect the influence of pre-Revolutionary Parisian esoteric philosophic movements which sought in primitivism a foundation for perpetual human progress. In a curious mixture of rationalism and illuminist thought which through sciences sought to discover a system of mystical correspondences that would inaugurate the regeneration of the mankind, reconstructions of a forgotten primeval language or an ancient philosophy were expected to unveil the mystery of antiquity and recreate a golden age that would serve as a basis for a new grand order. Yet, the question remains why these origins had to be located in remote, northern latitudes.

Writing from this period articulated new conceptions related to climate. Early modern climate theories sought to explain the perplexing diversity observed in nature and among different peoples in external circumstances, of which climate seemed to be among the most obvious ones. The climate theories also largely determined how the contribution of different regions or nations to scientific and cultural progress (contemporaneous or historical) were viewed and assessed at the time. In the northern countries, local scholars had been displeased to see the same prejudices often being projected on contemporary

¹⁰ Burrows Smith, *Jean Sylvain Bailly*, pp. 429–38. See also the preface in Bailly, *Lettres sur l'origine des sciences*, not paginated.

‘intellectual hierarchies’.¹¹ The revision of old mental maps required, therefore, a change in how climates themselves were understood. These, in turn, emerged from the new approaches in natural sciences facilitated by travel literature from the northern regions.

Bailly argued that in the quest for historical knowledge, an astronomer held a privileged position. For was not astronomy prerequisite for history and for time itself? The regularity in the movements of the stars provided the only means for measuring time and calculating the course of days, months, and years. By introducing time, astronomy alone had lifted man from his lonely state of barbarity and instituted the first societies. It was generally assumed that astronomy was the first of all sciences. Its origins could be retraced to a pastoral idyll where the first shepherds guarding their flock in the night had lifted their gaze upon the heavens. It was also a science *à part* because it was not based on utilitarian motivations. Philosophers also interpreted the veneration of celestial bodies as the origin of the first cults and religions.¹²

If astronomy was thus the discipline with the oldest roots, its history equalled that of human civilizations. Astronomy had been developing gradually on the basis of observations on celestial bodies and their trajectories. By peeling off, one by one, the past layers in the accumulation of this knowledge, Bailly expected to retrieve, through reasoning and calculation, the time and place where the first astronomical discoveries had been made and human civilization had taken its first and conclusive steps. Many phenomena could only be observed at a given time in a specific geographical location. Traditional chronologists had studied old inscriptions related to rare celestial phenomena as a means to determine the timely coordinates for great historical events that were inscribed in the same sources. Now, a historian-astronomer set out to calculate the fixed points in the history of civilizations by decoding a multitude of circumstantial evidence inscribed not in the chronicles of history but within the corpus of astronomical knowledge itself. Using such methods unavailable to most historians, one could return even to antediluvian times and reveal the identity of a forgotten primitive people, the progenitors of all great ancient civilizations.¹³

¹¹ For example, Mercier, ‘La théorie des climats’; Frängsmyr, *Klimat och karaktär*; Bots and Waquet, *La République des Lettres*, pp. 67, 77–78; Pihlaja, *Tiedettä Pohjantähden alla*, pp. 45–47; Pihlaja, ‘Northern Laboratories of Nature’, pp. 123–27.

¹² Bailly, *Histoire de l’astronomie ancienne*, pp. v–vi, xvj–xvii, 1–3, 17, 21–22, 93–94.

¹³ Bailly, *Histoire de l’astronomie ancienne*, pp. 58–60; Bailly *Lettres sur l’origines des sciences*, p. 218.

Myth still occupied a central place in this quest, but astronomy, being an exact science, was praised for giving it new exactitude.¹⁴ Astronomical facts were subjected to a prodigious cross-analysis against old mythologies and fables, which could be similarly interpreted as obscure reflections of events that had occurred in distant prehistoric times. By analysing the astronomical skill of the peoples who had traditionally been thought its inventors (Egyptians, Chaldeans, Chinese, and Indian Brahmins), Bailly perceived vestiges of an older source of knowledge behind their advanced practices. These people did not seem to be aware of the principles behind their practices, so it seemed likely that astronomy had been a gift from an unknown people not mentioned directly in any historical sources. Perhaps the deities that had been honoured as inventors of astronomy (like Zoroastre or Uranus) actually referred to historical persons.¹⁵

Bailly's chase after this 'anterior learned people' lead him to surprising places. Recalling the excitement that he felt in his childhood while perusing travel narratives, which described the distant peoples who inhabited the great Asian mountain ranges, he found that the mysterious people who had instituted astronomy and fostered it among other ancient civilizations had once inhabited these lands. Yet, the quest did not stop here. The ancestors of these peoples were, in turn, traced back to the legend of Atlantis and other famous fables. Bailly argued that these indirect traces consistently led towards the north. Old myths and 'probabilities' building on geographical and historical circumstances led him to their original homestead which he located on one of the remote islands of the Arctic Sea. Having first seriously considered Iceland, Greenland, and especially Novaya Zemlya, he identified it 'most probably' as Spitsbergen. Instead of actually sinking, the mythical Atlantis had perhaps been isolated by ice. After sailing off from their island, this primeval people had reached the northern coasts of Russia and wandered southwards along the river Ob, crossing the wide dominions now belonging to the Russian empire, before settling down on the mountainous areas of Middle Asia. From these fertile plains of the Central Asia and the Caucasus, more often viewed as sombre peripheries inhabited by Scythians and Tartares, their influence had radiated in all directions.¹⁶

¹⁴ Bailly *Lettres sur l'origine des sciences*, p. 17; Bailly *Histoire de l'astronomie ancienne*, p. 19. This approach can be contrasted with the Late Roman geographers' marriage of myth and maps discussed by Avdagic in this volume.

¹⁵ For example, Bailly *Histoire de l'astronomie ancienne*, pp. 19–20; Bailly, *Lettres sur l'origine des sciences*, pp. 72–74, 81, 91–134, 201–03; Bailly, *Lettres sur l'Atlantide*, pp. 23–90.

¹⁶ For example, Bailly, *Histoire de l'astronomie ancienne*, pp. 95–96; Bailly *Lettres sur l'origine des sciences*, pp. 224–68; Bailly *Lettres sur l'Atlantide*, pp. 415–23, 435, 464–70.

Rudbeck(ians) in Paris

Bailly adopted the ideas of Swedish patriotic historians who sought to prove that the North was the setting for all major ancient myths. North was the happy home of Hyperboreans and the mythical island of Atlantis, the point of origin for all great discoveries from astronomy to the alphabet.¹⁷ One of the central arguments for Swedish patriotic science was related to ‘hyperborean skies which, due to their proximity to the pole, provided the most advantageous settings for astronomical discoveries.’¹⁸ Olaus Rudbeck had argued that the principles of astronomy had been invented by an ancient Scandinavian king, Atle (also known in Greek mythology as Atlas, the Hellenic deity of the turning point of the world, which could again be interpreted as a reference to the proximity to the axis of the earth). From a mountain located in Lapland (today, in northern Finland), the sun could be observed from most varied angles. According to Rudbeck, this had allowed Atle to be the first to calculate the trajectories of the moon and the sun and to determine the length of a yearly calendar.¹⁹

There seems to be no clear indication of how Bailly came to adhere to Rudbeck’s ideas. True, he was frequently visited by Swedish travellers in Paris (partly because he had Swedish painter Alexander Roslin (1718–93) as a neighbour). Among his acquaintances was, for example, Friedrich Carl von Baër (1719–97), who was employed at the Swedish delegation as mediator between the Swedish and French academies of sciences, and was himself interested in history and the languages of the northern regions. Baër delivered to French scholars like Antoine Court de Gébelin (1719–84) lists of words in ‘Lappish’ (Sami) languages for comparisons between Hebrew, Greek, or Chaldean, through which the latter sought to reveal the structure of the primeval language spoken in earliest ages. Baër, however, had published a treatise positioning ancient Atlantis in Palestine.²⁰

Overall, Swedes had become disillusioned by a more critical approach of the new era, and the contents of Bailly’s book seem to have come as a surprise. Many years before, Bailly had entered in a correspondence with astronomer

¹⁷ See Eriksson, *Rudbeck 1630–1702*; Eriksson, *The Atlantic Vision*; Nordström, ‘Götisk historieromantik och stormaktstidens anda’.

¹⁸ Widmalm, *Mellan kartan och verkligheten*, pp. 42–43.

¹⁹ See Rudbeck, *Olf Rudbecks Atland*, ed. by Nelson, chaps 4 and 5; Eriksson, *Rudbeck 1630–1702*, pp. 370, 445, 462–63, 534–36.

²⁰ Reference to Baër’s treatise can be found in Bailly, *Histoire de l’astronomie ancienne*, pp. 285–86; Bailly, *Lettres sur l’Atlantide*, pp. 111–12.

Per Wilhelm Wargentin (1717–83), the secretary of the Swedish Academy of Sciences who, like Bailly, had studied the moons of Jupiter. Their letters do not seem to contain any references to Atlantean themes before Wargentin received a printed copy of Bailly's treatise in 1777.²¹ One Swedish astronomer noted how the overall physiognomy of a 'complaisant, sage et modéré' (docile, wise and moderate) man whom he met in Paris 'ne marque pas, qu'il a autant d'esprit, comme on en trouve dans son livre' (gave no hint of the liveliness of spirit that is met in his book).²²

In contrast, Parisian scholars had not altogether rejected Rudbeck's arguments. Although the great *Encyclopédie*, famous chef-d'œuvre of the French Enlightenment, referred to Rudbeck's etymological conjectures as an example to avoid, it also acknowledged that Rudbeck had not at all badly argued that the Greek alphabet was based on Scandinavian runes.²³ In the 1760s, one Swedish traveller was astonished to see the theory identifying another old Scandinavian king with the mythical inventor of the alphabet Cadmos propagated in Paris through a collection of French translations of Swedish learned writings by sue-dophile scholar Louis-Félix Guinement de Kéralio (1731–93) and exclaimed: 'Rätt si så! En Rudbeck kan efven upstå i sielfva Paris!' (Ah so! A Rudbeck can thus appear even in Paris itself!)²⁴

Bailly's conjectures and chains of arguments were, in many cases, directly loaned from Rudbeck, and he did not attempt to hide it. For example, he adopted the idea that the fable of Phoenix — the mythical bird with a three-hundred-year life span — contained a cryptic reference to polar areas where the sun remained invisible sixty-five days out of the 365. Both authors believed that this myth could be found both in Egyptian beliefs and Scandinavian poems of *Edda*. Similarly, the fable of Proserpina was to be interpreted as an emblem depicting the absence of the sun during the so-called polar night. The fable of Hercules and the Amazons, in turn, referred to circular trajectories of the celestial bodies in the proximity of the poles — a circumstance which had resulted in the invention of a six-month calendar (still in use among the natives in Kamchatka, as Bailly pointed out).²⁵

²¹ Stockholm, Centrum för Vetenskapshistoria, Kungliga Vetenskapsakademiens arkiv, Correspondance of Pehr Wilhelm Wargentin, Letter from Bailly to Wargentin, 8 March 1777.

²² Russki Akademii Nauk, Peterburgski Filial Arhiv, fond 1, opus 3, no. 65, fols 26^r–34^v.

²³ 'Lettres grecques', p. 409.

²⁴ Uppsala, Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek, Handskriftsavdelningen, Johan Henrik Lidén, fol. 670^r.

²⁵ Bailly, *Histoire de l'astronomie ancienne*, pp. 97–105; Bailly, *Lettres sur l'origine des sciences*, pp. 251–66; Bailly, *Lettres sur l'Atlantide*, pp. 107–66.

According to Bailly, these and many other circumstances could not have been discovered without having gained direct experience from a northern environment. Yet, in order for the astronomical knowledge to be perfected with varying observations and transported to other peoples, it needed to carry the marks of a 'great migration'.

Migratory Knowledge vs Enduring Prejudices

When tracing the progress of astronomy through history, Bailly claimed to see how the corpus of this knowledge had been gradually amassed at the same pace as the ancient people had slowly migrated from northern latitudes towards the south. The logical course of progression was towards the sun, especially for those keen on observing the sky. Different phenomena witnessed in different latitudes had left their mark not only on astronomy, but also on old traditions and fables. Other cultures preserved the memory of their experiences in their astronomical systems and cults through reference to distinctively northern phenomena. One example was the veneration of the northern lights by the Chinese, despite the rarity of the named phenomenon in their own country.²⁶

There were other indications that astronomical knowledge had not been acquired in southern regions alone. In part, they were based on environmental circumstances, such as a reversed version of Montesquieuan climate theory in which the southern skies presented less varied sceneries and the beauty of the regions made the spirit more languid. When considering the sum of all this evidence, Bailly declared, 'on croit voir le genre humain suivre le soleil & marcher vers l'équateur' (one thinks one sees before his eyes humankind following the sun and marching towards the Equator).²⁷

Bailly wished to overturn one of the premises in the history of civilizations: he set out to prove that 'les lumières soient venues du nord, contre le préjugé reçu que la terre s'est éclairée comme elle s'est peuplée du midi au nord' (the lights have arrived from the north, in contrast to the established prejudice that the earth was enlightened when it was populated from south towards north).²⁸ This had been Olaus Rudbeck's grand idea, although his Atlantis was, more 'moderately' one could perhaps say, placed in Scandinavia instead of the Arctic.

²⁶ For example, Bailly, *Histoire de l'astronomie ancienne*, pp. 102, 365.

²⁷ Bailly, *Histoire de l'astronomie ancienne*, p. 104.

²⁸ Bailly, *Histoire de l'astronomie ancienne*, p. 95; cf. Bailly, *Lettres sur l'origine des sciences*, p. 19; Bailly, *Lettres sur l'Atlantide*, pp. 256–58.

However, a map attached to Bailly's treatise depicted quite distinctively the river valleys in the north-eastern Swedish Lapland, and this gives reason to suspect that he, too, may have toyed with the idea that Scandinavia had been a potential scene of events and an alternative route for this 'great migration' southwards from Spitsbergen.²⁹

When philosophically interpreting the chains of complicated historical events, identifications and associations made between different peoples, ancient and contemporary, became blurred. Speculations regarding their mutual relations were based on sketchy old sources and travelogues. Northern Russia for instance, was known to have been inhabited by 'Finnic' tribes whose relationship with the Finns in the eastern parts of the Swedish kingdom remained somewhat obscure to contemporaries. Therefore, some astronomers from the eastern parts of Sweden could interpret Bailly's writings as an attempt to show that astronomy had been invented by Finns.³⁰ Correspondingly, Bailly borrowed from Rudbeck details related to alleged similarities between Finnish and Greek languages. On his map he marked the regions to the east of Sweden as the homestead of the Chud. This name had recently become famous owing to discoveries by explorer Peter Simon Pallas made during his long travels in Siberia, where he declared to have found to testify of vestiges of an old culture. This information fuelled speculations regarding the existence a forgotten northern civilization and was listed among Bailly's pieces of evidence.³¹ All in all, an eighteenth-century philosopher did not need to be too strict about precise details or coordinates, for what often mattered most was the general argument.

Yet it was his main argument — that the North was not a sterile periphery but rather a productive region in terms of learned accomplishments — that encouraged critique of Bailly. His fantastic conjectures were scorned by many, and interpreted in kinder terms as purposeful popularization by others.³²

²⁹ See also Bailly, *Lettres sur l'Atlantide*, pp. 416–17. Elsewhere Bailly discusses the language and manners of the Finns, the Sami, and Siberian peoples and refers to Nils Idmans's study concerning the similarities in Finnish and Greek languages; e.g., Bailly, *Lettres sur l'Atlantide*, pp. 281–89, 345, 376, 422.

³⁰ Kansalliskirjasto, Anders Planmanin arkisto, Kirjeenvaihto, Letter from Johan Lexell to Anders Planman, undated (appr. 1779).

³¹ Bailly, *Histoire de l'astronomie ancienne*, p. 95; Bailly, *Lettres sur l'Atlantide*, pp. 180–81, 287–92, 452. Other scholars who discussed the matter included, for example, Cornelius de Pauw and Peter Collinson.

³² Burrows Smith, *Jean Sylvain Bailly*, pp. 464–67; see, e.g., 'Reponse de M. le Marquies de Condorcet', pp. 17–18.

Bailly's opponents reverted to the old idea of the North as a 'womb of nations'. For them this meant a more traditional image of the North as a reservoir of uncivilized brutes who from time to time left their arid homestead and flooded through the northern borderlands to vandalize the south. This dystopian image found force in the fears and anxieties caused by attacks of barbarians in the Middle Ages, the triumphs of the Swedish army in the seventeenth century, and, more recently, the rising power of Russia in the eighteenth century.

Ironically, Bailly's main opponent became François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire (1694–1778), who is himself more often known as a propagator of lights 'arriving from the north' due to his close relations with empress Catherine II of Russia. Voltaire, however, insisted that the Brahmins were the original inventors of astronomy. The involvement of the hermit of Ferney spurred a wide interest towards the dispute. Bailly's later treatises took the form of public letters that were meant to convince Voltaire, while the latter renamed Bailly's work sarcastically a 'Histoire du ciel' and evoked the traditional image of belligerent barbarians of the north, asking: 'Est-il à croire que ces tigres partirent d'abord de leurs tanieres avec des quarts du cercle et des astrolabes?' (Is it to be believed that these tigers [of the north] first left their dens with quadrants and astrolabes?)³³

Swedish patriotic historians had sought to challenge the prejudices in these depictions of the north as a land of uncivilized brutes and an environment naturally hostile to culture and science. In this quest they had adopted nature itself as a complementary sphere for argumentation. In addition to historical sources, myths and linguistic comparisons, Olaus Rudbeck closely studied the specific characteristics of the northern nature, which he claimed helped rediscover in ancient myths. These remarks allowed him to argue that the events that were depicted in the fables had taken place in an allegedly northern environment, instead of the Mediterranean region.³⁴ This method also explains the duality which characterized Rudbeck's writings. The North had to appear sufficiently similar with respect to more southern countries so as to show that it had enjoyed equally favourable conditions and that its landscapes corresponded to the sceneries that were depicted in ancient fables. Paradoxically, it had to also appear as distinct, so that it could be identified as the only possible scene for these events.³⁵

Bailly's position depended upon both people and nature being static. In historical studies, identifications of ancient peoples adopted a rather ahistorical and timeless character as descents untouched by historical developments.

³³ Cited in Bailly, *Lettres sur l'origine des sciences*, pp. 3, 6–7.

³⁴ Widmalm, *Mellan kartan och verkligheten*, pp. 42–43.

³⁵ Eriksson, *Rudbeck 1630–1702*, pp. 317–18.

In terms of physical nature, the view of the world and its attributes was likewise static. Nature was not considered as something undergoing gradual transformations, but considered in the light of the Bible which affirmed the fundamental constancy of God's perfect creation. If the world, together with all the species, had been created as it was, then there was no room for change. Only when physical nature and climates were subjected to temporality could new grand narratives be proposed.

The Dynamic North of the New Natural Sciences

The new more positive approach to the North was reflected in conceptualizations of northern origins advocated in the writings of naturalist Georges Leclerc de Buffon, a friend of Bailly's and his supporter in Parisian learned academies.³⁶ Buffon's theory of the birth history of the earth lent a different kind of plausibility to Bailly's assumptions regarding the northern primeval civilization.³⁷

The idea that the world had been inhabited and civilized from south to north posed for some scholars a certain philosophical difficulty; namely, how to explain why anyone would have voluntarily sought their way to the inhospitable regions of the north. Voltaire, for example, had stated that while one could accept that a family could drift to an unknown island and stay there, it seemed unthinkable that anyone would leave their more comfortable dwellings and settle down in the barren mountains of Lapland to live on reindeer milk and fish. This logic supported the idea that the mankind had multiple origins: the exotic inhabitants of the North, like the Lapps (Sami) and their reindeer, appeared to be products of their own climate.³⁸ Concurrently, certain northern scholars, in particular the botanist Carl von Linné (1707–78), made use of the new interest towards arctic peripheries by propagating a pastoral idyll of the life of the reindeer herders he had encountered on travels in Lapland. In this era, many writers and philosophers who adhered to Rousseauan ideals of originality and authenticity started to depict the 'savage' North in more positive terms as a source of fresh strength and vigour which constituted a healthy challenge to the sluggish luxury which had corrupted the old Europe.³⁹

³⁶ Burrows Smith, *Jean Sylvain Bailly*, pp. 447, 497.

³⁷ Bailly, *Histoire de l'astronomie ancienne*, pp. 102–05; Bailly, *Lettres sur l'origine des sciences*, pp. 111–12, 306–48.

³⁸ Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœurs*, p. 97; cf. Bailly, *Lettres sur l'origine des sciences*, pp. 224–30; Pihlaja, *Tiedettä Pohjantähden alla*, pp. 198–202.

³⁹ For example, Broberg, 'Varför reser Linné?'; Sörlin, 'Rituals and Resources of Natural

It is not possible to go here into the detail of the early modern discussions regarding how the northern regions had been inhabited, whether this emigration had been forced or voluntary, or whether one should prioritize language, customs, or outward appearance when determining kinships between different nations. For naturalists, this issue was closely related to a changing concept of species. However, it is of interest to note how the problem of the 'uninviting' northern climate had been tackled. For example, scholars proposed that the northern regions had in ancient times benefitted from a milder climate just before the earth had undergone some kind of individual revolution or accident, like a comet or a deluge, which had effected a change in its temperatures. In Sweden, Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) speculated that the earth had in old days been spinning around its axis more rapidly than today, and this had equalized its temperatures. The quicker rotation speed also gave a natural explanation to the statements of the Bible which suggested that some of the ancients had lived for several hundred years.⁴⁰

At times, scholars found material evidence in the northern regions that testified to the existence of an ancient civilization. For example, French mathematician Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis (1698–1759) led a famous geodetic expedition to Lapland in the 1730s, during which he also made a small excursion to the woods with the purpose of examining a stone thought to contain mysterious old inscriptions. In fact, Olaus Rudbeck had some decades earlier sent another expedition to investigate this stone, which he had interpreted as a relic from an age in which the nomadic Sami people had had both books and princes as suggested by some of their traditional songs. Soon after his return, Maupertuis reported the case to the Académie des Sciences in Paris and stated that it was of great interest not only to those who studied antiquities, but also to those who were working with physical sciences. Maupertuis had not been entirely convinced that the marks on the stone were human-made, but *if* they were, this simple fact would revolutionize the history of the earth. As a civilization in such a climate was unthinkable, it would mean that the axis of the earth had once been displaced so that the poles and the equator had switched places with one another.⁴¹

History'; von Sydow, 'Linné och Lapland'; Pihlaja, *Tiedettä Pohjantähtien alla*, pp. 255–58.

⁴⁰ Swedenborg, *Opera quaedam*, ed. by Strohm, III, 301–02, 320; see also Frängsmyr, *Geologi och skapelsetro*, pp. 136–45.

⁴¹ Maupertuis, 'Relation d'un voyage'; Pekonen, *La Rencontre des religions*, pp. 223–37; Pekonen and Vasak, *Maupertuis en Laponie*, pp. 94–96, 182–202.

These speculations were thus a consequence of intensified exploration of the world that had lifted up details that did not quite fit into the views held traditionally about the globe and its climatic conditions. In addition to vestiges of old cultures that were found in seemingly peripheral regions, new natural findings, like fossils, were similarly found in climates that seemed alien to them. The revelation of unknown species that had apparently become extinct also seemed to suggest that new species could be engendered. Mysterious 'elephant bones' (mammoth bones) discovered in places as distant as Siberia or North America seemed to rule out old theories that the animals had marched around with the Roman army or had been carried around with the Great Deluge. This demand for new explanations with a more dynamic view of the history of the globe and its climates inspired the theory of an ongoing, gradual process of climatic change that was launched by Buffon in his treatise *Epoques de la nature* (1778). In this work Buffon claimed concurrently with Bailly's investigations on ancient astronomy that all animals, and even man, had a northern origin.

Buffon's interests lay, in particular, in the fauna of the world, and he tended to approach questions with philosophical distance. For Buffon, the study of nature was not about thorough analysis of individual specimens; it sought a wide, global outlook and flexible interpretations based on a large corpus of information that could uncover the relations between species and peoples inhabiting the globe. The physical history of the earth's creation set the scene for the slow generation of species and the process through which the globe had been gradually inhabited.⁴²

Through experiments where an iron ball was heated up in an oven, Buffon elaborated a new theory according to which the earth had been in the beginning a flaming block detached from the sun, originally too hot for any form of life. From this point forward, it was subjected to an ongoing global 'cooling' (*refroidissement*). As the globe had slowly started to cool down, the first regions to attain a comfortable temperature had logically been the poles and mountain tops, which continued to have the coldest climate. It was here that the first animals could come into being, in conditions which corresponded to the hot and torrid climate of the present-day Equator. Thus, the 'régions septentrionales [...] qui ne présentent aujourd'hui que des faces sèches & des sommets steriles, ont donc autrefois été des terres fécondes & les premières où la nature se soit manifestée' (northern regions [...] which today present only a dry

⁴² On Buffon and his method, see, e.g., Roger, *The Life Sciences*, pp. 427–74; Roger, *Buffon*, pp. 543–48; Duchet, *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des Lumières*, pp. 240–63.

facet [...] were in earlier times fertile lands and the first ones where the nature manifested itself).⁴³

As the globe continued to cool down, the first animals had migrated southwards following the climate zone, which had the most convenient temperature for them. They left the polar region vacant and ready to engender new species that were now created for slightly colder conditions. Later, these species also started to wander towards the south, although not as far as the ones before them. This is how, stage by stage, all species inhabiting the different climate zones had migrated from the poles to their current dwellings. The last ones to have left the poles were the animals adapted to arctic conditions. Man, too, was a product of cold and had apparently been born among the last species since he did not tolerate heat well. As the cooling was expected to continue, Buffon suggested that the northern regions would still produce novel and hitherto unseen species that possessed 'le temperament [qui] différera de celui du renne don't que la nature du renne diffère à cet égard de celle de l'éléphant' (a temperament [which] differs from the reindeer as much as a reindeer differs in this regard from an elephant).⁴⁴

Buffon seemed to believe that the findings that supported his view such as the mammoth bones in Siberia evidenced a former warm climate would soon be also reported from Scandinavia. A little later, however, he changed his opinion and suggested that these flatlands had been inundated under a primeval sea, while the mountain peaks of northern Asia became an alternative northern topos that had delivered the first peoples and the first seeds of scientific knowledge, because

le derrière du nord est toujours demeuré sans culture par la raison particulière qu'il étoit couvert par les mers pendant tous les espaces de temps où la chaleur douce faisoit fleurir la nature dans les continents voisins [...]. Les Sciences et les arts avoient donc déjà fuis de leur première patrie et s'étoient répandues du Thibet a la Chine, de la Sibérie aux Indes, de la Sibérie en perse et en Europe et jusqu'en Éthiopie, et chés les Atlantes en Mauritanie, mais elles ne se sont pas point établies dans les terres plus septentrionales que la mer n'a quittées que pour les laisser exposées à l'inclémence de l'air et a la trop grande rigueur du froid. Les hommes, a la verité, s'en sont emparés, s'y sont habitués, mais postérieurement a leur migration dans tous les climates plus heureux.⁴⁵

⁴³ Buffon, *Époques de la nature*, ed. by Roger, pp. 104–06, 139 (chapter 'Cinquième Époque').

⁴⁴ Buffon, *Époques de la nature*, ed. by Roger, pp. 137–49.

⁴⁵ Buffon, *Époques de la nature*, ed. by Roger, pp. 161–62.

(the bottom of the north was always left without culture for the particular reason that it was covered by sea during the time when the warmth allowed nature to blossom in the neighbouring continents [...]. Sciences and arts had already fled from their first homeland and spread from Tibet to China, from Siberia to India, from Siberia to Persia, to Europe, and all the way to Etiopia and to the Atlantians in Mauritania, but had not established themselves in the northernmost regions, which the sea left only to expose them to the inclemency of air and a too great rigour of cold. True, people have seized them and have become accustomed to them, but [only] following their migration to happier climates.)

In this way, Buffon deprived Scandinavia and the northernmost regions of the globe once again of the short-lived honour of having contributed to the early history of the mankind and the rise of its great civilizations. Although the gaze of philosophers was now fixed towards the north, the centre of historical events was again placed in new peripheries.

Conclusions

The general ideas of northern origins found in the writings of these French scholars owed much to earlier precedents, yet the meanings that were attached to them were not the same. Bailly removed the patriotic content of Olaus Rudbeck's arguments, instead harnessing the idea of a universal progress, the starting point of which was a single northern location.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, contemporaries found that the issue remained closely attached to prestige. The symbolic meanings attached to the history of science became evident with the reactions of the Russian empress Catherine II to Buffon's *Époques de la Nature*. The empress pampered the naturalist with furs and other expensive gifts and entrusted him with valuable old manuscripts that had been found in Siberia. In her letter to Buffon, she rejoiced how his book gave 'un nouveau lustre à ces provinces dont les fastes on été si longtemps plongés dans l'oubli le plus profonde' (new luster to these provinces the splendor of which for such a long time was buried in most profound oblivion). It proposed an advantageous way 'à lire l'histoire des pays et celle des arts dans le livre immense de la nature' (to read the history of countries and arts in the great book of nature).⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Burrows Smith, *Jean Sylvain Bailly*, pp. 454–83.

⁴⁷ Citation from editor's preface (by Roger) in Buffon, *Époques de la Nature*, ed. by Roger, pp. cxli–cxlii.

Similarly, Bailly seemed to believe that his election to the Swedish Academy of Sciences was a reward for the new glory he had lent to northern regions with *Histoire de l'Astronomie Ancienne*.⁴⁸ Overall, the conception of what belonged to the North was often highly ambiguous, allowing for alternative and overlapping connotations. For example, the 'North of Asia' that was depicted in these writings could be characterized as 'northern' only in very relative terms justified by associations between cold climates and mountains. This ambivalence also characterized the reception of these writings by contemporary readers whose reactions show how these ideas were again interpreted as a symbolic source for scholarly prestige. Although the real focus had been shifted somewhere else, Swedish scholars were now complemented by their foreign colleagues with acknowledgements that 'la Lumière des sciences selon Mr Bailly est venu autrefois du Nord, et il semble que la meme chose arrive encore aujourd'hui' (the light of sciences has once, according to M. Bailly, arrived from the north, and it appears that this is the case even today).⁴⁹

The speculations concerning the northern origins of civilization were rooted in a global vision on the world that was becoming more dynamic. When the earth and its climates were subjected to continuous transformations, the northern regions were given a more central and active role within these processes when viewed from the philosophical distance of a French *philosophe*. Yet cold and barren northern landscapes were continuously considered as a natural obstacle to cultural progress. The altered position of the northern territories in the history of civilizations relied on the assumption that over the course of history they had profoundly changed.

⁴⁸ Stockholm, Centrum för Vetenskapshistoria, Kungliga Vetenskapsakademiens arkiv, Correspondance of Pehr Wilhelm Wargentin, Letter from J. A. Bailly to P. W. Wargentin on 27 January 1778.

⁴⁹ Letter from R. Kirwan to Torbern Bergman, London, May 7 1784, in *Torbergn Bergman's foreign correspondance*, ed. by Carlid and Nordström, p. 194.

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APPENDIX: EXCERPTS FROM PRIMARY SOURCES

The following English-language excerpts are provided to give the reader a feel for the variety of ways that the North is characterized in premodern texts. The passages all take up what it means to be in, of, or from the North. The sources are grouped into four themes: poetic ideas of North, North as the source of nations, human character in the North, and nature in the North. While overlapping, these categories identify some of the most prevalent ways that Northerness was understood before 1800. Many of these authors and works are cited in multiple chapters of this volume because of their wide-ranging influence, both among premodern writers and today's scholars. While this appendix is in no way exhaustive, we hope it is instructive about visions of the premodern North.

1. Poetic Ideas of the North

Pindar's People Beyond the North Wind

And traveling neither by ships nor on foot could you find
the marvelous way to the assembly of the Hyperboreans.

With them Perseus, the leader of the people, once feasted,
upon entering their halls,
when he came upon them sacrificing glorious hecatombs
of asses to the god. In their banquets
and praises Apollo ever finds greatest delight
and laughs to see the beasts' braying insolence.

And the Muse is no stranger
to their ways, for everywhere choruses of maidens,
sounds of lyres, and pipes' shrill notes are stirring.

With golden laurel they crown their hair
 and feast joyfully.
 Neither sickness nor accursed old age mingles
 with that holy race, but without toils or battles
 they dwell there, having escaped
 strictly judging Nemesis.

Pindar, *Pythian Odes*, trans. by William H. Race
 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), x.29–44.

The Far North According to Romans

You equally, Caesar, though we don't yet know which cohort
 of the gods will soon enroll you — whether you'll wish to keep
 cities safe and care for our lands, so the great circling world will
 take you as source of earth's fruits and master of seasons,
 placing Venus' wreath of myrtle around your temples;
 whether you shall come as god of the vast sea, and sailors worship
 only your holy spirit, *Ultima Thule* bow down to you,
 and Ocean's wife spend every wave to buy you for her daughter.

Virgil, *Georgics*, 1.24–31, trans. by Janet Lembke
 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

This is no ordinary, no flimsy wing which will bear
 me, half-bird, through the liquid air,
 nor shall I longer remain on the earth,
 but, grown too large for envy, I shall leave

its cities. I, who am of the blood of poor parents,
 I, who come at your command,
 my beloved Maecenas, shall not die,
 nor be confined by the waves of the Styx.

Already, even now, rough skin is forming
 on my legs, my upper part is changing
 into a white swan and smooth feathers
 are sprouting along my fingers and shoulders.

Already more famous than Icarus, son of Daedalus,
I shall visit, a harmonious bird, the shores
of the moaning Bosphorus, the Gaetulian Syrtes,
and the Hyperborean plains.

The Colchian will know me, and the Dacian who pretends
not to fear a cohort of Marsians, the Geloni
at the ends of the earth, the learned Iberian,
the Rhône-swigger.

Let there be no dirges or squalid mourning
or lamentation at my corpseless funeral.
Check your cries of grief and do not trouble
with the empty honour of a tomb.

Horace, *The Complete Odes and Epodes*, 2.20, trans. by
David West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

These days the sea has yielded,
and endures all laws.
No need of a boat framed by Pallas,
bringing home princely rowers,
a famous *Argo*:
any little rowboat wanders over the deep.
All boundaries are removed, and cities
have established their walls in new lands.
Nothing is left where it once belonged
by a world open to access.
The Indian drinks the cold Araxes,
Persians the Albis and the Rhine.

There will come an epoch late in time
when Ocean will loosen the bonds of the world
and the earth lie open in its vastness,
when Tethys will disclose new worlds
and *Thule* not be the farthest of lands.

Seneca, *Medea*, 364–81, in *Tragedies*, vol. I, trans. by
John G. Fitch (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Ovid's Tale of Boreas and Orithyia

— But mighty Boreas
 desired the hand of Orithyia, fair
 and lovable.—King Tereus and the Thracians
 were then such obstacles to Boreas
 the god was long kept from his dear beloved.
 Although the great king (who compels the cold
 north-wind) had sought with prayers to win her hand,
 and urged his love in gentleness, not force.
 When quite aware his wishes were disdained,
 he roughly said, with customary rage
 and violence: 'Away with sentimental talk!
 [...]

Tremendous actions are the wine of life!—
 monarch of Violence, rolling on clouds,
 I toss wide waters, and I fell huge trees—
 knotted old oaks—and whirled upon ice-wings,
 I scatter the light snow, and pelt the Earth
 with sleet and hail! [...]

And now impetuous Boreas, having howled
 resounding words, unrolled his rustling wings—
 that fan the earth and ruffle the wide sea—
 and, swiftly wrapping untrod mountain peaks
 in whirling mantles of far-woven dust,
 thence downward hovered to the darkened world;
 and, canopied in artificial night
 of swarthy overshadowing wings, caught up
 the trembling Orithyia to his breast:
 nor did he hesitate in airy course
 until his huge wings fanned the chilling winds
 around Ciconian Walls.

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Brookes More
 (Boston: Cornhill, 1922), Book vi.675–721.

The Northern Wind According to Shakespeare

Poison'd,—ill fare—dead, forsook, cast off:
And none of you will bid the winter come
To thrust his icy fingers in my maw,
Nor let my kingdom's rivers take their course
Through my burn'd bosom, nor entreat the north
To make his bleak winds kiss my parched lips
And comfort me with cold. I do not ask you much,
I beg cold comfort; and you are so strait
And so ingrateful, you deny me that.

History of King John, Act v, Scene 7.
King John speaking.

Thou dost, and think'st it much to tread the ooze
Of the salt deep,
To run upon the sharp wind of the north,
To do me business in the veins o' the earth
When it is baked with frost.

The Tempest, Act I, Scene 2.
Prospero speaking.

No, believe me, 'tis very cold; the wind is northerly.

Hamlet, Act v, Scene 2.
Hamlet speaking.

True, I talk of dreams,
Which are the children of an idle brain,
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy,
Which is as thin of substance as the air
And more inconstant than the wind, who woos
Even now the frozen bosom of the north,
And, being anger'd, puffs away from thence,
Turning his face to the dew-dropping south.

Romeo and Juliet, Act I, Scene 4.
Mercutio speaking.

2. *North as the Source of Nations*

Jordannes's Idea of Scandinavia as the 'Womb of Nations'

And at the farthest bound of its western expanse it has another island named Thule, of which the Mantuan bard makes mention: 'And Farthest Thule shall serve thee.' The same mighty sea has also in its arctic region, that is, in the north, a great island named Scandza, from which my tale (by God's grace) shall take its beginning. For the race whose origin you ask to know burst forth like a swarm of bees from the midst of this island and came into the land of Europe.

[...] Now in the island of Scandza, whereof I speak, there dwell many and divers nations, though Ptolemaeus mentions the names of but seven of them. There the honey-making swarms of bees are nowhere to be found on account of the exceeding great cold. In the northern part of the island the race of the Adogiti live, who are said to have continual light in midsummer for forty days and night, and who likewise have no clear light in the winter season for the same number of days and night. By reason of this alternation of sorrow and joy they are like no other race in their sufferings and blessings.

[...] Now from this island of Scandza, as from a hive of races or a womb of nations, the Goths are said to have come forth long ago under their king, Berig by name.

Published as *The Gothic History of Jordanes, in English Version with an Introduction and a Commentary*, trans. by Charles Christopher Mierow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1915), pp. 53–57.

The Multitude from the North

The region of the north, in proportion as it is removed from the heat of the sun and is chilled with snow and frost, is so much the more healthful to the bodies of men and fitted for the propagation of nations, just as, on the other hand, every southern region, the nearer it is to the heat of the sun, the more it abounds in diseases and is less fitted for the bringing up of the human race. From this it happens that such a great multitude of people spring up in the north, and that that entire region from the Tanais (Don) to the west (although single places in it are designated by their own names) yet the whole is not improperly called by the general name Germany.

[...] Since, therefore, the peoples established with the island [Scandinavia] had grown to so great a multitude that they could not now swell together, they divided their whole troop into three parts, as is said and determined by lot which part of them had to forsake their country and seek new abodes.

Published as *History of the Langobards by Paul the Deacon*, trans. by William Dudley Foulke (Pittsburgh: University of Pennsylvania, 1907), bk I, chaps 1 and 2.

Normandy as a Land of Northmen

In English and Norse ‘man’ is equivalent to ‘homme’ [hume] in French. Bring together ‘north’ and ‘man’ and together you say Northman, that is ‘man of the north’ in the vernacular, and from this came the name Normans. Those who were born where the north wind comes from are habitually called Normans, and from the Normans is derived the name Normandy, which they have populated. It used to be called Neustria, as long as it belonged to the French, but because of the men who came from the north it retained the name of Normandy, because the Normans, who lived in that land, populated it. The French say that Normandy is the land of beggars from the north [north mendie]. The Normans, people say in jest, came begging from the north, because they came from another land to obtain better possessions and make conquests.

Published as *The History of the Norman People: Wace’s Roman de Rou*, trans. Glyn S. Burgess (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), p. 91.

3. *Human Character in the North*

Climate and Condition in *Polychronicon*

For þe son beme al wey abideþ vppon þe men of Affrica, and draweþ oute þe humours, and makeþ hem schort of body, blak of skyn, crips of heer, and by drawing oute of spirites makeþ hem coward of herte. Þe contrarie is of norþern men, in þe whiche colde wiþ oute stoppeþ smale holes and poorus, and holdeþ the hete wiþ ynne; and so makeþ hem fatter, gretter, and whitter and hatter with inne, and so hardier and boldere of herte.

Published as *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis*, ed. Churchill Babington (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1865), I, 53.

The Cold and Character

The first is that the men of these lands for the most part are of a very great stature, well proportioned and beautiful face, and among them there are too many giants of greatness, and in the inland they are even older.

The snow in all the northern lands is so great that all the mountains and high places never fail to have snow throughout the year, often snow also in valleys and low places; and so great was the cold, that there never ceases to be very good pasture for the cattle, both wild and tame, so as to sustain them without failure, because the herbs in coldness increase their yield and improve their nature.

Published as Antonio de Torquemada, *Jardín de Flores Curiosas*, ed. by Enrique Suárez Figaredo, *Lemir*, 16 (2012), 605–834 (p. 802).
English translation by D. Jørgensen.

His Habit of Body denotes the *Quality* of the cold Climat that makes Men have a good Stomach, a quick Digestion. His Posture, the *Bravery* of the *Northern* People, by reason of their Abounding with Blood.

Published as *Iconologia: Or, Moral Emblems by Cæsar Ripa*, trans. and ed. by P. Tempest (London: Benjamin Motte, 1709).

The Religion of the Northern Invaders of Normandy

Besides, as the completion of their expulsions and departures, they would at some future time offer sacrifices, venerating their god Thor. They would not propitiate him by some offering of cattle or sheep or wine or grain, but they would sacrifice human blood, reckoning it the most precious of all offerings, and therefore, in accordance with the prior determination of a soothsayer priest, several victims would at the same time be struck abominably in the head by a team of oxen and, once the brain of whichever one had been chosen by lot in that land was dashed by a solitary blow, that one would be thrown to the ground and the filament on the left side of his heart, that is the blood-vessel, would be hunted down. Besmearing their own heads and those of their followers, as is their custom, with his drained blood, they swiftly launch the canvas sails of their boats to the winds and, reckoning that they have appeased the winds by such business, they would swiftly ply the oars of their boats. If, on the other hand, after a more important casting of lots, horsemen were to depart, they would raise up the martial banners of battle. And thus, slipping away from their own borders, they would conceive a deadly plan for the extortion of other nations.

Published as *Dudo of St Quentin's Gesta Normannorum, An English Translation*, ed. by Felice Lifshitz, chap. 2. 'ORB Online Library' <http://163.238.55.65/orb_done/dudo/dudindexe.html> [accessed 30 September 2017]

Uncivilized and Civilized, Body and Mind, North and South

Since the body and the mind are swayed in opposite directions, the more strength the latter has, the less has the former; and the more effective a man is intellectually, the less strength of body he has, provided the senses are functioning. It is plain, therefore, that the southerners excel in intellect, the Scythians in body. Aristotle intimates this in Book VII of the *Politics*; robust and spirited men have less talent, and their public affairs are not properly directed. Africans, however, have more than enough wisdom, but not enough strength. Yet this is necessary, both for repelling enemies and also for protecting citizens[...] But it came about by a certain divine goodness—or shall I say wisdom?—that the Africans have more wit and the Scythians a more powerful physique, lest, if He had given a foxlike cunning to men wild as bulls or great strength and endurance to Carthaginians keen as foxes, they might use His gifts for destruction. Nothing is more cruel, said Aristotle, than armed injustice. Moreover,

he believed that those to whom He allotted moderate strength excelled the remainder in humanity and justice, a trait which in *Questions* he attributed to a temperate climate. 'Why,' said he, 'are people who suffer from too great cold or heat uncivilized?' Is it because the best climate makes the best customs? In that case why do all historians praise so highly the innocence and the justice of the Scythians and execrate the customs of the southerners?

Here I see a decision in history, in order that we may not have disagreement between philosophers and historians. The matter is not without complexity, for fat men are not at all evil, as Caesar decided rightly about Antony and Dolabella, but Brutus and Cassius, lean men, must be feared. The northerners, however, are heavy, the southerners lean. What Tacitus said of the Germans is therefore true: 'The race is not astute or cunning; for the freedom of revelry opens the secrets of the heart, and the frank opinion of all is reconsidered the next day. Due weight is given to both periods.' Moreover, this is one reason why kings and tyrants formerly sought for their bodyguard, and in these days also always seek, Thracians, Scythians, Germans, Circassians, and Helvetians at large salaries; not that they distrust the strength of their own men, as many stupidly think, but that they understand that in the vast bodies of the Thracians there lies concealed the minimum of cunning and malice and that they are more pleased with the office of soldier than with that of ruler. In what respect, then, are they called cruel and uncivilized? The reason is obvious, for the farther one is from human culture, that is, from the nature of men, the nearer he approaches to the likeness of beasts, which, since they are lacking in reason, are unable to restrain their wrath and appetites. So it happens that the northerners are carried by impulse into acts of cruelty.

Published as John Bodin, *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, trans. by Beatrice Reynolds (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), pp. 98–99.

A Dialogue on the Demons of the North between Philomathes (Phi) and Epistemon (Epi)

Phi. But what is the cause that this kinde of abuse is thought to be most common in such wild partes of the world, as Lap-land, and Fin-land, or in our North Iles of Orkney and Schet-land.

Epi. Because where the Devill findes greatest ignorance and barbaritie, there assayles he grosseliest, as I gave you the reason wherefore there was moe Witches of women kinde nor men.

Phi. Can anie be so unhappie as to give their willing consent to the Devilles vilde abusing them in this forme.

Epi. Yea, some of the Witches have confessed, that he hath perswaded them to give their willing consent thereunto, that he may thereby have them feltred the sikarer in his snares; But as the other compelled sorte is to be pittied and prayed for, so is this most highlie to be punished and detested.

Published as King James VI of Scotland, *Daemonologie* (Edinburgh, 1597), bk III chap. 3.

Strangeness of the North According to Cervantes

Thou mayest thank God, good man, for having delivered thee from the hands of these sorcerers, whereof there are very many in these northern countries. Men say they transform themselves into wolves, as well men as women, for there are such of both sexes. How they do this I know not: but being a Christian and a Catholic, I believe not any such thing, and yet experience hath made me see so much. That which I can herein conceive, is, that these transformations are nothing else but the devil's illusions permitted by God for man's correction.' I asked him what time of the day it might be: he told me that in these countries, far towards the north, the year was distinguished into four seasons, and that there were three months continually night wherein the sun could not be seen above the earth in any sort; three months twilight of the day, not being absolutely day or night; three months of bright day, wherein the sun never went down; and other three months of the night's twilight: that the season wherein they now were, was twilight of the day, and that it were a vain hope to expect as yet the sun's brightness or think upon return into my country till the season of the day, wherein ships went from those coasts to carry merchandise into England, France and Spain. He demanded of me if I knew any trade whereby to get my living till the time of the year came wherein I might return. I told him I was a master to teach dancing, a great caperer, and a good player on the viol. Here at he began to laugh, and said that these exercises were never used in that country.

Published as Miguel de Cervantes, *The Travels of Persiles and Sigismunda:*

A Northern History, ed. by T. L. Darby and B. W. Ife, chap. 8.

<<http://www.ems.kcl.ac.uk/content/etext/e006.html>> [accessed 30 September 2017]

4. Nature in the North

North as a Division of the Earth

For the globe is divided into five parts, termed zones, and all that portion is subject to severe cold and perpetual frost which is under the two extremities, about each of the poles, the nearer of which is called the north, and the opposite the south, pole. In all these regions there is perpetual darkness, and, in consequence of the aspect of the milder stars being turned from them, the light is malignant, and only like the whiteness which is produced by hoar frost. The middle of the earth, over which is the orbit of the sun, is parched and burned by the flame, and is consumed by being so near the heat. There are only two of the zones which are temperate, those which lie between the torrid and the frigid zones, and these are separated from each other, in consequence of the scorching heat of the heavenly bodies.

Published as Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, ed. by John Bostock and H. T. Riley (London: Taylor and Francis, 1855), bk II, chap. 68.

The Northern Animals

There are many different kinds of animal spread across the globe, which are assigned their own spheres and allotted their own characteristics. Just as unequalled numbers of those without very thick hair, including elephants, camels, leopards, lions, ostriches, tigers, apes, and their like, swarm in hot countries, so also in cold regions you may find many beasts with dense fur because of the bitterly cold winters they have to overcome. Such are polar bears, black aurochs, tall elks, large reindeer, savage wolves, voracious gluttons, sharp-eyed lynxes, crafty otters, beavers useful in medicine, timid roe deer, cunning foxes, both black and white, and elsewhere other wild animals with uncommon natures and names which I shall introduce methodically in successive chapters below. This is principally to enable the pious reader to realize the marvelous tenderness and affection of our heavenly Creator for all His creatures, which are everywhere in the world subject to His direction, especially those which, with the natural shrewdness granted to them, must preserve themselves in the very cold climate of the northern region. In other words, when the ground is totally sealed off by snow and frost and grazing is impossible, they manage not only to survive but also to produce and feed young of their kind, remaining unharmed during the harshest weather.

One must, however, prudently observe the habitat and nature of each breed, for an invariable law of Nature has laid it down that it can continue its existence nowhere better than the place where it was born.

[...] In the northern areas of Eastern and Western Bothnia (lands of the extreme north, which take their name, as it were, from the bottom of a pot) and of Great Lappland, there is a three-horned animals, of the deer species but far taller, sturdier, and swifter. It is called a reindeer (*rangifer*), for two reasons: one, because it carries high horns on its head, like the boughs of an oak tree; the other because the harness with which it draws sledges, set over its antlers and chest, is called *rancha* and *locha* in the native language.

Published as Olaus Magnus, *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus, Romæ 1555* (Description of the Northern Peoples, Rome 1555), trans. by Peter Fisher and Humphrey Higgens, ed. by Peter Foote (London: Hakluyt Society, 1998), III, bk XVII, preface and chap. 26.

The Sea as the Home of Monsters

Here to the north lies the very deep fjord which encloses within itself Charybdis, Scylla and inescapable whirlpools. Here too are solid-frozen capes and these hurl into the seas gigantic blocks of ice, whose size is increased when they are deluged by the gushing waves, since they freeze together in the cold of winter. Here traders making for Greenland often put in against their wishes and consequently undergo great danger after they suffer shipwreck. For here live huge sea-beasts of various species, that will smash the stoutest vessels to smithereens and gulp down the crews; some of these they will drown. One-eyed, very ferocious walrus are to be found here, cutting furrows through the ocean depths, with manes fanning out. There, also, are the whale and the hafstramb, a gigantic creature but without tail or head, which merely strings upwards and downwards like a tree-trunk, and only appears in order to predict perils for sailors. There, too, one may discover the hafguva and the hafkitta, the very largest of marine monsters, and all the countless others of their kind.

Published in *Historia Norwegie*, ed. by I. Ekrem and L. Mortensen, trans. by P. Fisher (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2003), p. 57.

The Whales of the Sea

Aside from the whales in the ocean, there are, I should say, but few things in the Icelandic waters which are worth mentioning or discussing. The whales vary much both in kind and size. [...]. Some of them are dangerous for men to meet, while others are gentle and peaceable. One of these is called humpback; this fish is large and very dangerous to ships. It has a habit of striking at the vessel with its fins and of lying and floating just in front of the prow where sailors travel. Though the ship turn aside, the whale will continue to keep in front, so there is no choice but to sail upon it; but if a ship does sail upon it, the whale will throw the vessel and destroy all on board. [...] Then there is a kind of whale called the rorqual, and this fish is the best of all for food. It is of a peaceful disposition and does not bother ships, though it may swim very close to them. This fish is of great size and length; it is reported that the largest thus far caught have measured thirteenth times ten ells, that is, one hundred and thirty ells by the ten-count. Because of its quiet and peaceful behavior it often falls prey to whale fishers.

Published in *The King's Mirror (Speculum Regale—Konungs Skuggsjá)*, trans. by Laurence Marcellus Larson (New York: American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1917), chap. 12.

Daniel Defoe's Journey through Britain

Here, for our great Encouragement, though it was but about the Middle of August, and, in some Places, the Harvest hardly got in, we saw the Mountains covered with Snow, and felt the Cold very acute and piercing; but we found, as in all those Northern Countries, the People had a happy Way of mixing the Warm and Cold together; for the Sotre of good Ale, which flows plentifully in the most mountainous Part of this country seems abundantly to make up for all the Inclemencies of the Season, or Difficulties of Travelling, adding also the Plenty of Coals for Firing, of which all those Hills are full.

We mounted the Hills, fortified with a little of this Precaution, early in the Morning; and, though the Snow, which had fallen in the Night, lay a little upon the Ground yet we thought it was not much; and the Morning being calm and clear, we had no Apprehension of an uneasy Passage; nor did the People at Rochdale, who kindly directed us the Way, and ever offered to guide us over

the first Mountains, apprehend any Difficulty for us; so we complimented ourselves out of the Assistance, which we afterwards very much wanted.

Published in Daniel DeFoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain Divided into Circuits or Journies*, 7th edn (London: Rivington and others, 1769), III, 142–43.

On the Remoteness of the North

Because of the roughness and other great rigor of the cold, there are no contacts with those who inhabit the other place, neither them nor us have cause to do so; and so, since they also do not have to come and go here, why go to them if it was not for very great curiosity of some who wanted to know and understand some other features of the world, as did Marco Paulo of Venice, when he walked so much of the world that until now there has been no other man who has walked so much.

Published as Antonio de Torquemada, *Jardín de Flores Curiosas*, ed. by Enrique Suárez Figaredo, *Lemir*, 16 (2012), 605–834 (p. 787).
English translation by D. Jørgensen.

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